

THE ARGOSY.

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THE HOUSE OF HALLIWELL.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IV.

HESTER'S ROMANCE.

THE years went on, in their quiet cottage, till Alfred was of an age to be ordained. Lucy's education was well finished, and Mary's was progressing. Mrs. Pepper they heard from occasionally: she liked much an Oriental life, but two children, born to her, had both died.

The last vacation before taking orders, when Alfred came home he brought a friend to spend it with him. The family had walked to meet the coach, and when it came, and Alfred jumped off it, a gentleman about his own age followed him.

"My friend, George Archer," he said, "you have heard me speak of him. And you, George, have heard of my sisters. These are two of them, Hester and Lucy."

What a handsome man he was, this stranger! Tall, fair, gentlemanly; with a low, sweet voice, and a winning manner. He is often in Hester's mind's eye, as he looked that day, though so many, many years have now gone by.

Is like attracted by like? Rarely. No two persons could be much less similar than Hester and George Archer; and yet they were attracted to one another. He seemed formed to be one of the ornaments of the world, she to be of use: she was of slight figure, with a pleasant face and dark hair, but of beauty she had none; he was indeed one of the most attractive of men. Hester thought so then, and now, that she can judge dispassionately, she thinks so still. We must all have our romance in life, and Hester's had come for her before that vacation was over. He spoke out at once to Mrs. Halliwell.

She had no objection to give Hester to him, provided they would wait; but it seemed to her, she said, that they might have to wait

for years. Hester's heart beat, and her colour went and came. Was it she waited till her hair was grey, what of that? To see each other occasionally, to be secure in each other's love, was not that sufficient bliss? She did not speak, but her colour deepened.

"Of course, my first year's curacy must be passed upon hope," said Mr. Archer, "but when that is over, why should luck not give me a living, as it does to other clergymen?"

"It does not always give one," observed Mrs. Halliwell. "You have no interest."

"Neither interest nor fortune," returned Mr. Archer. "My father is dead, and what came to me has been spent upon my education. Something like Alfred."

"And Hester has nothing. She will have five hundred pounds at my death; but, were that to happen to-morrow—"

"Oh, mamma!" interrupted Hester, "do not talk of that."

"My dear child, talking of my death will not bring it on. I was about to say that were the money at your command to-morrow, you could not marry upon it."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Archer. "I should be the last to take Hester from a good home unless I had one equally good to offer her. I trust it may be a better, whenever it shall come."

"We have been accustomed to a better, until the last few years—if, by that, may be understood a more wealthy one," said Mrs. Halliwell.

"Then I am to have her?" said George Archer.

"In prospective," answered Mrs. Halliwell with a smile. "And when you can show me a certainty of bread and cheese, you shall have her in reality."

Mrs. Halliwell was called from the room, and he cast his arms around Hester. "My darling, will you bear to wait for me?"

Bear to wait for him! Her glowing cheek told how willingly, though her tongue was silent.

It had been long talked of, and was now recently arranged, that the good old rector of Seaford, Mr. Coomes, should take Alfred Halliwell as curate. He was growing feeble now, and required one. The prospect of having Alfred close to them was delightful to his family, more especially to Mrs. Halliwell. It came to be hinted that this plan might be changed: who first thought or spoke of it, Hester never knew; *she did not*: but it was whispered that instead of Alfred Halliwell being curate of Seaford, it might be George Archer. Mrs. Halliwell was startled. She did not like it. She spoke to Alfred; but he, light-hearted and good-natured, was ready to sacrifice anything and everything for his friend and his favourite sister. Mrs. Halliwell could not remonstrate openly against it: her old-fashioned notions of the extreme courtesy due to her son's guest forbade it: but she spoke privately to Hester: she thought the latter might have stopped it with a word. *That word Hester could not bring her heart*

to speak. "Selfish! Selfish!" It is the reproach that has clung to her conscience since. Ay, and with cause.

"How Aunt Copp will be deceived, when she comes home and finds you are engaged!" exclaimed Lucy to her sister. "She will not crow so much over her fortune-telling, for the future. Hester, I do believe she will be quite angry. She is so fully persuaded that you are not to marry."

Hester smiled, a quiet smile of happiness.

The time came, and they were ordained together. The Reverend Alfred Halliwell was appointed to a curacy in a remote district of North Wales, and the Reverend George Archer to Seaford.

He came. He read himself in on the last Sunday in Lent, the day preceding Passion Week. Seaford Church stood about midway between the village and the gates of Seaford Park. It was called the old church, in contradistinction to the new one, St. Jude's. It was a small, low, unpretending edifice, only one monument within it and one handsome pew, and they belonged to the Earls of Seaford. As they walked into church that day, which will ever be one of those left in Hester's memory, she did not look up, but she saw by intuition that George Archer was in the reading-desk, and the rector in his pew. Mr. Coomes, for that day, was only one of the congregation.

He began the service, and they stood up. It is one of the few remembered moments of agitation in Hester's life; her breath came fast, she saw nothing, and her face was white as the snow outside. It was a very early Easter, that year, and the snow lay on the ground. In poor Hester's foolish fancy, she thought everybody must be looking at her; as if the congregation, in their curiosity to look at and listen to him, regarded her! He had a persuasive voice, low and silvery, and though it did not tremble he was certainly nervous in his new position, for his bright colour went and came.

When Hester gathered courage to look round, she forgot everything in astonishment. Against the wall, under the one monument, facing the side of the pulpit, was the pew of the Earls of Seaford, with its brass rods and crimson curtains. During the four years they had gone to Seaford Church (previously they had attended St. Jude's) that pew had always been empty, and now it was occupied! Standing at the end, was a young lady, just budding into womanhood, very beautiful; at the other end was a man of fifty, short, but of noble presence, with wrinkled brow and grey hair; and, standing between these two, were four lads, of various ages, from ten to sixteen or seventeen. The young lady's eyes were fixed on George Archer's face, and Hester could not take her gaze from hers. It was the sweetest face she had ever seen, with its exquisite features, its delicate bloom, and its dark, spiritual-looking eyes: it is the sweetest face that ever rises to her memory. Hester glanced round at the large

pew at the back, near the door : it was filled with male and female servants, some of them in the Seaford livery, and she knew then that it was the Earl of Seaford, his sons, and his daughter, the Lady Georgina.

Mr. Archer was to dine that day with the Halliwells, and Hester thought that he would accompany them home from church. But they had been in half an hour, and dinner was waiting to be served, when he entered. Lord Seaford had detained him in the vestry.

"I was surprised to see them," remarked Mrs. Halliwell. "They must have come down late last night. I thought they were not in England."

"They have been abroad these three years, the Earl told me," said Mr. Archer.

"And they have not been here for much longer than that. I did not recognise one of the children, and scarcely Lord Seaford. Was he pleasant with you?"

"Very much so. He invited me to the castle, and said Lady Seaford would be glad to see me, but that she was a great invalid."

"A very fine family," resumed Mrs. Halliwell. "The daughter is beautiful."

"Is she?" said Mr. Archer.

"Did you not think so?"

"To tell you the truth," said he, smiling, "I was thinking more about myself, and the impression I made, than taking in any impression likely to be made on me. My thoughts were running on whether I pleased Mr. Coomes and the congregation."

"I only trust Alfred will succeed as well," returned Mrs. Halliwell. "Was it your own sermon?"

"It was indeed," he said, earnestly. "I have written many. I used to write them for practice at college."

Oh, those Sundays!—for Mrs. Halliwell generally invited him—their peaceful happiness will never be erased from Hester's memory. The intense, ecstatic sense of joy they reflected on her heart is a thing to be remembered in silence now, as it was borne then.

They went to church that evening, and Hester attended better than in the morning; more courage had come to her. The family from the castle were not there. After service Mr. Archer overtook them in the churchyard, and drew Hester's arm within his. Mrs. Halliwell expected him to walk with her: she was quite of the old school and very particular with her daughters. However, she walked on with Lucy, and they followed, he pressing her hand in the dark night.

"Hester, dearest," he whispered, "shall I do?"

"Do?" she repeated, scarcely heeding what he meant, in her weight of happiness. For it was the first time they had walked thus familiarly together.

"Shall I do for a clergyman, think you? Shall I read and preach well enough for them?"

He knew he would, there was conscious triumph in his voice as he spoke; what need for Hester to give him her assurance? Yet she tried to speak a timid word of congratulation.

He clasped her closer to him, he held her hand with a deeper pressure, he halted in the narrow path, and, raising her face to his, kissed it lovingly. "Oh, Hester, my dearest, how happy we are in each other!" he murmured; "how bright will be our future!"

Mrs. Halliwell called to them. Perhaps she missed the echo of their footsteps; perhaps she thought they were lingering too far behind. "Mr. Archer, are you and Hester not walking slowly? It is very cold." So he raised his face from hers, and they went on close to Mrs. Halliwell and Lucy.

"Oh!" cried poor Hester once, after the lapse of many years, "let me believe that he did indeed love me! I am an old woman now, and have struggled through a lonely life, carrying with me a bruised heart. But let me believe that my dream was real; that during its brief lasting, George Archer's love for me was pure and true."

Alfred Halliwell fell ill in June. He had been ailing ever since he went down to Wales. The weather, when he travelled, was severe, the place bleak, and he wrote word home that the cold seemed, from the first, to have struck on his chest and settled there. In June he grew worse, and wanted his mother to go down.

"I shall send you instead, Hester," said Mrs. Halliwell, after pondering over his letter.

The hot colour flushed into Hester's face, and she looked up to remonstrate. What! send her away from Seaford, miles and miles, where she could never see *him*, hear his voice, or listen for his step! But a better feeling came over her, and the hasty words died away upon her lips: how could she refuse to comfort her sick brother?

"Hester is thinking of Mr. Archer," laughed Lucy. "Now, Hester, don't deny it; I can see it in your face. Look at it, mamma. She is indignant that anyone should be so unfeeling as to banish her from Seaford."

"Hester must remember that she is, in a remote degree, the cause of this illness of Alfred's. Had he been curate here his indisposition would have been well attended to at first, and not suffered to get ahead."

Mrs. Halliwell's tone was mild, but Hester's conscience smote her. Lucy saw her downcast look.

"Mamma," she said, "let me go to Alfred instead of Hester."

Mrs. Halliwell shook her head. "It is not only that Hester is three years older than you, Lucy, but she has a steadiness of character and manner which you want. I can trust her to travel alone; you are too giddy."

"Why, you know we always said that Hester was cut out for an old

maid, with her starched notions and sober ways," retorted Lucy, who was feeling angry. "I'm sure it is a mistake, her being married."

"A very good mistake," said Mrs. Halliwell.

So it was settled that Hester should visit Wales, and George Archer spoke with her about his prospects the evening before her departure, spoke sanguinely. They were sitting in the garden. He was indulging a chimera; though neither thought it one then.

"Do not deem me vain, Hester," he said, "if I tell you something I have never told you yet. It is our approaching separation that draws it from me."

She turned her grave but sweet dark eyes towards him.

"I believe that Lord and Lady Seaford took an extraordinary fancy to me. Something more than usual."

"I think they must have done so," answered Hester. "They had you with them so frequently during the fortnight of their stay."

"When they return here for the autumn—as they purpose doing—perhaps this liking for me may be improved to bring forth fruit," he went on. "He, Lord Seaford, may give me a living."

"Oh, George!" she exclaimed, "I think he is sure to do it. The idea never occurred to me before."

"The worst is, these noblemen have so many calls upon their patronage," continued Mr. Archer. "If one place drops in, a dozen candidates are ready for it."

"Your uncle is a clergyman, George," proceeded Hester; "could he not help you to something?"

"You mean my uncle Elliot. No, he could do nothing. His living is a good one, but he has a large family of his own. Clergymen can rarely help one another to preferment. If the Earl will only take me in hand, I shall want no one else's help. I think he will."

"I am so glad you have told me. It will be something to dwell upon while I am away. There's mamma calling to us—that it is getting dark, and we are to come in."

He rose, and strained her to him, before they entered. "Mind you don't forget me while you are away," he whispered.

"No, no," she replied, dashing away a few tears from her eyes.

The Seafords had gone to town, after Easter, for the season and for Lady Georgina's presentation. It was said that she bore away the palm of beauty at the drawing-room; that George the Fourth, sated though he was with ladies' charms, had spoken publicly of her exceeding loveliness.

When Hester reached North Wales she found Alfred very ill; but what he chiefly wanted was care—he called it coddling. He lodged with a mining overseer and his wife, who were attentive to him, in their rough, free way, but who had no knowledge of the cares and precautions necessary in illness. Hester's heart smote her when she saw the want of all comfort in the place, the contrast it presented to the home he would have had at Seaford.

However, what was to be done now was to get him well. And Hester was one of those right and rare spirits who set themselves to make *the best* of present exigencies, to meet and grapple with whatever duties may arise. As it has pleased God, in His infinite wisdom, to allot to us all some especial talent of usefulness (though many, in their carelessness, go to their lives' end and never find out their own), so Hester believed that her humble one lay in being useful to others, particularly in nursing, tending and soothing the sick. She entered heartily on her task, and with the aid of warm weather, and another and a better Aid, she got Alfred round again. By the end of August he was quite well, and she went back to Seaford.

It was a long journey for her: travelling in those days was not what it is now; but she halted at Shrewsbury. They had some very distant acquaintances living there, of whom they knew little more than the name, but Mrs. Halliwell had written to ask them to receive Hester, which they kindly did for a night, both going and returning. She left Shrewsbury early in the morning, and reached Seaford about eight in the evening.

She never doubted that George Archer would be waiting for her, but they came flocking round the coach-door, and he was not there. Mrs. Halliwell, Lucy and Mary. It was a lovely summer's night; the harvest moon near the full; but a dark shade seemed to have fallen on Hester's spirit.

She did not inquire after him—when the heart truly loves, it is always timid—yet they talked a great deal during the walk home, and at supper. Chiefly about Alfred: the situation of his home, the sort of people with whom he lived, his parish duties, and the family at Shrewsbury; it seemed they never would tire of asking Hester questions, one upon another. But when she and Lucy went up to their bed-room for the night, she put on an indifferent manner, and inquired if they saw much of Mr. Archer.

"Not so much as when you were at home, of course," laughed Lucy, "his attraction was gone. And, latterly, very little indeed. Since the Seafords came, he is often with them. And he is reading with Lord Sale and Master Harry Seaford. They go to him every day."

"Are the Seafords at the castle, then?"

"They came in July. Parliament rose early; the King went to Brighton, and all the grandes followed his example, and left town. We get all the 'fashionable intelligence' here now, Hester."

"Did he know I was expected to-night?"

"The King?"

"Don't joke, Lucy," pleaded Hester, "I am tired. You know I meant Mr. Archer."

"Yes, he knew it. We met him this morning, and Mary told him, and I wonder he did not go with us to meet the coach. Perhaps he is dining at the castle; the Earl asks him sometimes. Very dangerous to throw him into the society of that resplendent Lady Georgina."

"Dangerous?"

"Well, it would be, I should say, if he were not cased-round with your armour."

"How much more nonsense, Lucy? One so high and beautiful as Lady Georgina!"

"That's just it, her beauty," laughed Lucy. "I will defy the lowliest curate in the church to be brought within its radius, and not be touched with it. Nevertheless, I suppose you will have your adorer here to-morrow morning, as constant as ever."

And he came. No one was in the room, and he clasped Hester to his breast and kissed her tenderly. Her two months' absence were amply repaid by his looks and words of love.

"I thought to have seen you last night," she whispered.

"So did I, Hester. I had been copying some music for Lady Georgina, and went to the castle with it, after dinner; and the Countess, and some of them, kept me talking till past ten. I was thunderstruck when I took out my watch, for I did not think I had been there an hour."

In his coveted presence, with his tender words, with his looks of love, how could Hester conjure up uneasy thoughts? And what had grated on her feelings in this last speech, she drove away.

Mrs. Halliwell had made acquaintance with the housekeeper at the castle, a reduced gentlewoman, whose husband had also been in the army. Mrs. Stannard had taken tea with them once or twice, and it was from her Lucy got what she styled her "fashionable intelligence."

One morning, about a week after Hester's return, Mrs. Stannard called, and asked if she would like to go to the castle and teach English to the little Lady Ellen Seaford. This child, the youngest of the family, had a Swiss governess, but no one, just then, to teach her English. Lady Seaford was lamenting this in the hearing of Mrs. Stannard, and the latter thought of Miss Halliwell.

Hester was electrified—frightened—at the proposal. "I am not competent to be a governess; I don't know anything; I never played a note of music," she breathlessly said.

"It is only for English, my dear," said Mrs. Stannard, "I am sure you must be quite competent to teach that. They don't want music or any other accomplishment. Your going to the castle for two or three hours a day would be quite pastime, and you would be paid well."

So it was decided that Hester should go, each day, from half-past two to five, to give Lady Ellen Seaford English lessons. She entered on her duties the following Monday, and went up to the old castle with fear and trembling, wondering what real lords and ladies were like in social intercourse, and how they would accost her and what she should answer; wondering whether she should have to sit in a saloon, all gilding and mirrors. "The goose I was!" poor Hester said afterwards. The schoolroom was plain, almost bare, and the lords and ladies were just like other people; free and unceremonious.

in their speech and manners to each other, as the children had been in her own home.

The Countess was a tall, grand woman, quiet and reserved. None of her children resembled her except Viscount Sale. She was wrapped in a thick shawl, though the day was hot, and looked pale and ill. One day, in that first week, Lady Georgina came into the room while the little girl was reading, and Hester rose up to receive her.

"Don't let me disturb you," she said, in a pleasant, careless tone. "Miss Halliwell, I presume. Has my sister nearly finished reading?"

"Yes," interrupted Lady Ellen, shutting the book of her own accord. "I have read a page, and that's enough. The words are hard, and I don't like it."

Hester knew that the child had not read half enough, but she doubted whether it was her place to differ from her, and at that early stage did not dare to do so. She stood in hesitation.

"Miss Halliwell," said Lady Georgina, bringing forward a huge portfolio, "do you know how to mount handscreens? Look at this pair which I have begun. I am not making a good task of them. Can you help me? Mademoiselle knows no more about it than this child. Ellen, let my paintings alone."

As it happened, Hester did know something of the work. She had a natural taste for it, and for drawing. When a child, she would spend hours copying the landscapes on an old china tea-set, and any other pretty view that came in her way. George Archer once found one of her old drawings, and kept it, saying he should keep it for ever. Poor Hester!

She told Lady Georgina she believed she could assist her, but that the little girl had only just begun her studies.

"Oh, her studies are of no consequence for one day," remarked Lady Georgina, in a peremptory tone. "Nelly, dear, go to Mademoiselle; my compliments, and I am monopolising Miss Halliwell this afternoon."

The child went out of the room, glad to be dismissed. She disliked learning English, and had told Hester that her French lessons were much less difficult to her.

"Do you cut the gilt paper out on a trencher or with scissors?" asked Lady Georgina. "For the flowers, I mean."

Before Hester could answer, a merry-looking boy of fifteen, or rather more, looked into the room, and then sprang in. It was the Honourable Harry Seaford.

"I say, Georgy, are you in this place? I have been all over the house after you. Who was to think you had turned school-girl again? What are you up to, here?"

"Why do you ask?" inquired Lady Georgina, without raising her eyes from the screens.

"Papa wants to know if you mean to ride with him this afternoon, and he sent me to find you."

"No," she replied. "Tell papa it will be scarcely worth while, for I must begin to dress in an hour. And I am busy."

"You can go and tell him yourself, Madam Georgy. There's Wells with my pointer, and I want to catch him."

"Where is papa?"

"Oh, I don't know; in the library, or somewhere."

He had vaulted down stairs as he spoke, and Hester saw him tearing after the gamekeeper.

Lady Georgina left the room, Hester supposed to find the Earl. When she returned, she halted before a mirror that was let into the panel between the windows, and turned some of her flowing curls round her finger. Her sylph-like form, her fair neck and arms—for it was not the custom then for young ladies to have these covered, even in morning dress—her bright hair, her patrician features, their damask bloom, and the flash of conscious triumph lighting her eye! Very conscious of her fascinations was the Lady Georgina Seaford. She caught Hester's earnest gaze of admiration, and turned sharply round.

"What are you thinking of, Miss Halliwell?"

The question startled Hester. She supposed, in her timid ignorance, that she must confess the truth, when a noble lady asked it. So she stammered out her thoughts—that until she saw the Lady Georgina, she had not imagined it possible for anyone to be so lovely.

"You must be given to flattery, in this part of the world," was the young lady's answer, with a laugh and blush of conscious vanity. "Another, here, has avowed the same to me, and I advised *him* not to come to the castle too often, if there were a danger that I should turn his head."

Who was that other? A painful conviction shot over Hester that it was Mr. Archer.

Lady Georgina seemed quite a creature of impulse, indulged and wilful. Before she had sat twenty minutes, she pushed the drawings together, said it was stupid, and they would go on with it another day. So the little girl came back again.

At five o'clock Hester was putting on her bonnet to leave, when Lady Georgina re-entered the room, in full dress. They were going out to dinner. An India muslin frock, with blue floss trimming, a blue band round her slender waist, with a pearl buckle, pearl side-combs in her hair, a pearl necklace, and long white kid gloves. It was the mode of dress then—and a very pretty one.

"Nelly," she said to her sister, "I want you to give a message to the boys." And she bent down and whispered the child.

"William or Harry?" asked the little girl aloud.

"Oh, Harry," replied Lady Georgina. "William would not trouble himself to remember."

She left the room again. What the purport of her whisper was, of course Hester did not know. Mademoiselle Berri, the Swiss governess, was in the room then, writing, and when Lady Ellen ran

to the window and got upon a chair to lean out of it, she quitted the table, pulled the child back, and said something in French, very fast, as it sounded to Hester, and the child replied equally fast. She could not understand their language, but it seemed to her that they were disputing.

"Miss Halliwell will hold me then," said the little girl in English, "for I *will* look. I want to see Georgy get into the carriage. Please hold me by my frock, Miss Halliwell."

Hester laid hold of the child by the gathers of her buff gingham dress, and the governess began to talk to her. Hester laughed and shook her head. "What does Mademoiselle say?" she inquired of Lady Ellen.

"Oh, it's about a little girl she knew falling out of a window and breaking her *reins*. It is all a *conte*, you know; she says it to frighten me. What do you call *reins* in English? There's Georgy; she has got on mamma's Indian shawl."

Hester bent forward over the head of the child. The bright curls of Lady Georgina were just flitting into the carriage, and something yellow gleamed from her shoulders. It was the Indian shawl. The Earl stepped in after her, and, following him, in his black evening suit and white cravat, went George Archer. Hester's heart stood still.

"I wish dear mamma was well enough to go out again," sighed the little girl. "Georgy has all the visiting now."

She remained looking after the carriage, and Hester remained holding her. They saw it sweep round to gain the broad drive of the park. Lord Seaford was seated by the side of his daughter, and *he* opposite to her.

CHAPTER V.

THE LADY GEORGINA.

AUTUMN and winter passed away, and it drew very close to the anniversary of the period when Mr. Archer first became curate. There was no outward change in his position with regard to Hester; to the few in the family confidence the Reverend George Archer was still the engaged lover of Miss Halliwell. But a change *had* come, and they both knew it.

It seemed that a barrier had been gradually, and almost imperceptibly, growing up between them. He was cold and absent in manner when with Hester, and his visits to Mrs. Halliwell's were not frequent. He appeared to be rising above his position, leaving Hester far beneath. Mr. Coomes was ailing, rarely accepted the dinner or evening invitations sent him, and since the Earl's stay at the castle, much visiting had been going on. So the county gentlemen would say "Then you will come and say grace for us, Archer," and he always went. It would sometimes happen, when they were going a distance, as on the above day, that Lord Seaford

invited him to a seat in his carriage; and he was often now a guest at the castle. It has been said he was a handsome man; he was well informed, elegant, and refined; as a clergyman he was regarded as, in some degree, an equal by the society so much above him, and he was courted and caressed from many sides. Thus it was that he acquired a false estimation of his own position, and ambitious pride obtained rule in his heart. But not for all this was he neglecting Hester. No, no; there was another and a deeper cause.

Easter was later this spring than the last, and on its turn the Seafords were to depart for town. Hester's duties at the castle would conclude the Thursday in Passion Week; and it may be mentioned, that over and above the remuneration paid her, which was handsome, the Countess pressed upon her a gold and enamel bracelet, which Mrs. Halliwell said must have cost a small fortune. Hester has it still; but it is not fashioned as those worn now.

Thursday came, Hester's last day, and after their early dinner she set off to walk to the castle. A rumour had reached her that afternoon, that Mr. Archer had thrown up his curacy. His year had been out three weeks, but he had agreed to remain on, waiting for something better, at a stipend of a hundred a-year. Hester had been looking forward to the departure of the Seafords, with a vague hope that the old, loving, confidential days might return; and now this rumour! It seemed as if there was to be no hope for her in this cruel world, and she sat down to the lessons of little Ellen Seaford as one in a troubled maze. Before they were over Mademoiselle Berri came in, and told the child to go to her mamma: some visitors had called who wished to see her.

"You will stay to take de thé wid me dis afternoon," said mademoiselle, who had now made some progress in English.

"No, thank you," answered Hester. "My head aches, and I want to get home."

"You cannot go till madame la Comtesse has seen you: she did say so. Ah, but it is triste in dis campagne! I have de headache too, wid it. I shall have de glad heart next week to quit it."

"You have always found it dull, mademoiselle?"

"As if anyone was capable to find it anything else! Except it is de Lady Georgina. And perhaps de Earl, wid his steward, and his shooting, and his affairs. But for de Lady Georgina, she does keep herself alive wid flirting: as she would anywhere. She is de regular flirt."

"But then she is so very beautiful."

"Eh bien, oui, if she would dress like one Christian. But de English don't know how; wid deir bare necks and deir curled hair. Dere is no race in de world who ought to put on clothes, Miss Halliwell, but de French women."

"Lady Georgina always looks well," sighed Hester. Was it a sigh of jealousy?

"For de fashions here, she do," answered mademoiselle, shrugging her shoulders at the "fashions here." "But she has got de vanity! And not no mercy. She has turned de head of dat poor young minister, and ——"

Something like a great spasm took Hester's throat. "Do you mean Mr. Archer?" she interrupted.

"To be sure. One can see dat his heart is breaking for her. And she leads him on—leads him on. I do tink she loves him one little bit—but I only whisper dis to you, my dear, for de Earl and de Comtesse would give me chivy if dey heard me. But when she has amused herself to her fancy, she will just laugh at him, and marry. It is her fiancé dat is de handsome man."

Hester's heart leaped into her mouth. "Is Lady Georgina Seaford engaged?" she burst forth.

"You do seem surprised," cried the French woman. "She is to have Mr. Caudour. He is my Lord Caudour's eldest son, and is now abroad wid some of the embassies. Dat is why he has never been here. He is some years older dan she, but it is de good *parti* for her, and dey will be married dis summer."

Mademoiselle talked on, thinking Hester listened, but she heard no more. A weight was taken from her heart. And yet, with what reason? For to couple a lowly curate with the Lady Géorgina Seaford was ridiculously absurd, and her good sense told her so. She had to wait to see the Countess; it was the evening she gave her the bracelet; and it was nearly six when she left the castle.

The evening is in her memory now. It was still and balmy, and the sun was drawing towards its setting. She took the slanting cut through the park, which was the shortest way, and, in hastening along the narrow path, where the trees hung thickly overhead, she came face to face with Mr. Archer. He was going there to dinner: she saw it by his dress. He shook hands in a constrained manner, and then there was a silence between them, as there often had been of late. Some power—Hester has never thought it was her own—nerved her to speak.

"I wanted to see you. I am glad we have met. We heard this afternoon that you had given up your curacy. Is it so?"

"Yes," he answered, breaking off a switch from one of the trees, and beginning to strip it with the air of a man who knows not what he is about, while he kept his face turned from Hester.

"Then you have heard of another," she said.

"I have accepted what may lead to something better than a curacy," he replied, tearing away at the stick. "The post of resident tutor to the young Seafords."

Was it a spasm, now, that fell on Hester's heart? Ay, one of ice. "Then you leave here; you go with them?" she faltered.

"When they leave next week I shall have to accompany them. We must temporarily part, Hester."

"Temporarily!" Calm as was Hester's general nature, there have been moments in her life when she has been goaded to vehemence. This was one of them. "Let us not part to-night without an explanation, Mr. Archer," she broke forth. "Is it me you love, or is it Lady Georgina Seaford?"

The red light from the setting sun was on them, for, in talking, they had moved restlessly to the opening in the trees, and the landscape lay full around, but the warm colour did not equal the glow on his face. Hester *saw* he loved the Lady Georgina: far more passionately than he had ever loved her. He stood in hesitation, like a guilty coward, and no words would arise at his bidding.

"Shall I give you back your freedom?" uttered Hester: "I see we can no longer be anything to each other. I wish, from my heart, we had never been."

"Hester," he exclaimed, suddenly taking both her hands, "you would be well quit of me. A man with the unstable heart that mine has proved would never bring you happiness. Curse my memory, in future, as you will: I well deserve it."

"But what do you promise yourself, to have become enthralled with *her*, so immeasurably above you?" was wrung from Hester, in her emotion.

"I promise myself nothing. I only know that I can live but in her presence, that she is to me in the light of an angel from Heaven. May it forgive my infatuation!"

"You need forgiveness," whispered Hester. "To indulge a passion for one who will soon be the wife of another."

"Of whom!" fiercely asked the young minister. The glow on his face had faded, and his lips were so strained that the teeth were seen—he who never showed them.

"She is to marry Lord Caudour's son."

"Ah, that's nothing, if you mean him," he answered, drawing his breath again. "She has told me she dislikes him. And though her father desires the match, he will not force her inclinations."

"Then you wish your freedom back from me?" And poor Hester's lips, as she asked it were as white as his own.

"Pardon my fickleness, Hester! I *cannot* marry you, loving another."

"Then I give it you," she continued, in a sort of wild desperation.

"May the wife you choose never cause you to regret me."

"Thanks, from me, would be like a mockery," he whispered; "I can only hope that you will find your reward. Let us shake hands, Hester, for the last time."

She held out her right hand. And he took it in his, and bent down his forehead upon it, and kept it there. Hester saw his lips move; she thought he was praying for her welfare. *He pray!*

They walked away in opposite directions; but soon Hester stopped, and looked after him. He was striding on. He never turned; and,

as he approached the bend in the path, which would hide him from her sight, he flung the little switch away, with a sharp, determined gesture, as he had just flung away her love. Oh, the misery that overwhelmed that unhappy girl! The dreadful blank that had fallen on her! She cast herself upon the grass, where no eye could see, and sobbed aloud in her storm of despair.

She heeded not how long she lay. When she got up, the sun had set; it was dusk; and she staggered as one in drink, as she departed. In passing the rectory, a sudden idea occurred to her, and she went in. Scarcely in a fit state for it; but there might be no time to lose. Mr. Coomes was drinking his tea by firelight.

"Why, my dear," he said, "is it you?"

She sat down with her back to the fire, not caring that even his dim eyes should see her face in the faint light. And then she told him what she called for—to beg him to take her brother as curate.

"My dear, it is true that Mr. Archer is going to leave me; but who told you of it?"

"He told me so himself."

"He is a changeable fellow, then. He said he did not wish it immediately known; not to anyone; and requested me to keep it secret. I have been thinking of your brother."

"Oh, Mr. Coomes," she urged, "you know it was through me he was driven away from here, to give place to Mr. Archer. Since his illness that thought has rested like a weight on my conscience. He has been ill again this winter; the bleak air there tries him. If you would only receive him as curate now?"

"We will see about it," answered Mr. Coomes. And Hester rose to go.

"Hester," he whispered, in a kindly voice, as he followed her to the door, "how is it between you and George Archer? Serene?"

"That is over," she said, striving to speak indifferently. "We have bid each other adieu for ever."

"If I did not think this! He is losing himself like an idiot. God's peace be with you, my child."

The Reverend Mr. Archer went up to town with the Seaford family; and Mr. Halliwell, whose year of curacy was out, in Wales, took priest's orders, and became curate of Seaford. Monotonously enough for Hester the time passed until August, when the Seafords returned to the castle; but Mr. Archer was not with them, neither was the Lady Georgina. It had all come out to the Earl. Hester, who had heard nothing and knew nothing, was at the window when the carriages drove by; watching for them, if the truth must be told. The two carriages passed very quickly, and she did not recognise a single face, save little Ellen's, who was sitting forward. She looked for Lady Georgina's; and she looked for *his*, but she saw neither. Near the park-gates, that same evening, she met the child

and the governess. Hester entered, and sat down with the latter on one of the benches, and the little girl ran about in glee; it was pleasant for her, after the confinement of London. Hester's throat was twitching wildly; but she would not ask after him. She did, however, inquire, in a roundabout way, of Lady Georgina, hoping that might lead to his name.

"De Lady Georgina, oh, she is well enough," answered Mademoiselle Berri. "You know dat she did marry yesterday."

"Marry," echoed Hester, her heart standing still.

"It was de quietest wedding possible, because Madame la Comtesse is so ill. De Lady Georgina, she is all for de show, and she was not pleased; but de Earl would not hear of having de world. Dey had but ten people at de breakfast besides de family."

"Are they—is Lady Georgina come back with you?" gasped Hester in her terrible suspense.

"Come back wid us! Ma foi! She did go away wid her husband after de breakfast. Dat is anoder of your barbarous English customs. Wid us, when a young girl marries, she does stay in her own house wid her mother for some days, but you send de poor young thing all away by herself.—Lady El-lène, you will have de face like one chou rouge if you do jump like dat."

Hester could bear it no longer. "Who has Lady Georgina married?" she asked in a low tone, turning her face away as if watching the movements of the little girl.

"My dear, who should she marry but de Honourable Caudour? He was fiancé to her dis long time—I do not know your word for it. He does doat upon her, and thinks her de vraie ange. Dey are gone to Lord Caudour's chateau at Riche-monde, and den dey are going on to de Continent. Ah, Ciel! if I was but going too! Dis England will kill me. I have got de vrai mal du pays at my heart. Mi Lady El-lène, donc! reste plus tranquille."

Sunshine stole over Hester. She nerved herself to speak in a careless tone; with her face still turned to the child. "Has Mr. Archer come back with the young Seafords?"

"What, de young minister? Not he. He will never enter de doors of dat family more, and we have anoder tutor. My dear, don't you know that de Earl turned him out?"

"No," uttered Hester.

"It was—let me see—I think in June; I know de shivers of de dreadful English spring had passed. The Vicomte, young Sale, heard a great chatter, like a dis-pute, between his sister and de minister, and he looked into de room and heard him say dat he would forgive her for saying what she did, and she was laughing den, and he had got her hands and was kissing and clasping dem like one great donkey as he was, poor fellow, for he might have seen dat she was but amusing herself wid him. So Lord Sale—I do think he did it for mischief, for de Earl had come in den, and Mr. Archer had gone out

—asked his sister when de wedding was to be, and why she did not write to Mr. Caudour to tell him she had jilted him for de parson. Wid dat de Earl rose up his ears and asked what was meant. I do not know what Lord Sale said, but de Lady Georgina she was in de furious rage wid him for days after. De Earl went into de library and sent a servant for Mr. Archer to go to him dere.”

“Did he go?” cried Hester breathlessly.

“My dear, how could he help himself? And when he got dere he showed himself de double donkey, for he did avow to de Earl dat he *loved* de Lady Georgina—dat he loved her better dan life.”

“And the Earl—what did he say?”

“What would he be likely to say in such a case?” returned the governess. “Dey are all full of sang froid, all de English nobles. He just poohed him down with contempt, and said his services were not required in de house after dat hour, and paid him his money, and wished him good morning, all cool and civil. Dat’s what de Earl did.”

“So he left!”

“He saw de Lady Georgina before it, though. And she treated him as civilly as de Earl had done, and said she was very sorry but it was no fault of hers, and dat he should not so have mistaken her. He said dat his heart was breaking for her—could she not see dat it was? She replied dat she should always retain a pleasant memory of his flattering sentiments towards her, but she could not say any more. Oh, my dear, she was a vain girl, she did think men were but made to make homage to her. She went, all gay, to a soirée at the Duchess of Gloucester’s dat same evening, widout one care for de killed heart of dat poor young clergyman. Child, you are looking pale, it is dis heat, you should untie your bonnet-strings.”

“I feel the heat very much,” murmured Hester.

“Oh, but talk of pale faces, you should have seen his when he left de Earl’s,” added Mademoiselle. “I was coming in from a walk wid de little girl and met him in de hall. He held out his hand to me to say good-bye, and I looked up at his wan face—it was one tableau of miserie. ‘Where are you going to dat you say farewell?’ I asked, for I did not yet know what had happened dat morning. ‘I know not where I am going,’ he replied, ‘away from here.’ And while I was in de surprise he was gone.”

“Where did he go?” asked Hester.

“My dear, who’s to know? If you ask my opinion, I should say dat he just went to de nearest river, or to an empty room and a charcoal fire. I know if my face betrayed what his did, I should not be anxious to live. I did pity him wid all my heart. And he was so handsome, so much de scholar and de gentleman.”

“Was he never heard of again at the Earl’s?” resumed Hester in a low voice.

“Never. He was not likely to be. Are you going, my dear? Dere is no hurry.”

"Mamma will be waiting tea for me," said Hester. "I shall see you another day."

She walked away with her bruised heart. All through that spring and summer she had unconsciously cherished a hope of the period when he should return to the castle. As she reached home Lucy met her.

"Hester," she whispered, "we have been hearing some news from Mrs. Stannard. George Archer has made such a fool of himself."

"Ah!"

"Made an offer to the Earl for Lady Georgina, or something of the sort: Mrs. Stannard never came quite at particulars, she says. And the Earl turned him out of the house that same day."

"Mademoiselle Berri said he had left," returned Hester, knowing she must answer something. "I have just seen her in the park."

"I fear you have long been grieving after him," went on Lucy, "though you persist in being so silent over it. Your coolness with each other, and the breaking off of the engagement, which you never satisfactorily explained, is accounted for now. What an idiot he must be, to have dared to think seriously of Georgina Seaford! I am sure this news must cure you. Never give a thought to him again, Hester; he is not worth it."

"I do not think of him," answered Hester, almost fretfully. She could not bear that even Lucy should suspect her misery.

"What a good thing it is, Hester, as things have turned out, that your engagement was not made public, especially at the castle. Lady Georgina and Mr. Caudour were married yesterday."

"Mademoiselle said so. What did Mrs. Stannard call here for? To impart this news about Mr. Archer?"

"She came with a message from the Countess: that little Ellen Seaford would be ready for you whichever day you would like to begin."

"I will not go to the castle again," said Hester, quietly; "that is over."

"Hester," said her mother to her, as she kissed her forehead when they parted for the night, "you can think over resuming your duties with Lady Ellen Seaford. My opinion, my dear child, is that it will be pleasant to yourself to do so, rather than the contrary, as it will serve to occupy your mind. But if you still say it cannot be, perhaps we can substitute Lucy."

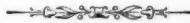
Mrs. Halliwell said no more, only kissed her again, more affectionately than usual, but Hester understood. She lay awake all that night, battling with her unhappiness. Towards morning she began to ask herself whether it was not *her duty* to go again to the castle, rather than idly to resign herself to sorrow. It is true she disliked to mingle with them again: to be in the scenes that reminded her so powerfully of *him*. Her mother had said that Lucy might possibly be her substitute; but Lucy's education had been of a higher order

than her own, for she had shown much aptitude for all polite accomplishments, and Hester knew that not very patiently would Lucy sit down to teach the rudiments of English to a child. The salary received from Lady Seaford was a consideration to them, for her brother, what with his illness and the pitiful stipend of his first year, had been obliged to encroach considerably on their means. Mary's education was also now expensive. They had tried the plan of Lucy teaching her, but it did not answer; both were impatient: a sister can rarely exert the necessary authority over a sister. Added to these reflections, Hester felt that the occupation would really serve to divert her mind.

So she resumed her visits to the castle. Mr. Archer's name was never mentioned there by anyone. Mademoiselle Berri seemed to have exhausted her stock of information that first afternoon, and did not again recur to the subject; Hester steadily went through her duties at home and abroad, and thus got over the days as she best could: but at night she would turn about upon her sleepless bed and moan, "Oh! that he would come! that he would come back to be forgiven!"

And the days, and the weeks, and the years went on, and they never heard of him, and he never came.

(To be continued.)



SONNET.

The whole day long the bright stars shine and burn,
And yet I see them not.—Thus, oh, my God,
Thou shinest on my soul, and I, dull clod
Of earth, from Thine undying light still turn.
All night fresh dews from Heaven fill mine urn:
Pure dews of peace and prayer and faith, which I
Forget until the sun has drunk them dry.
For one pure drop in vain my soul doth yearn,
Athirst and faint with sin and arid doubt.
And all my life, from birth until the grave,
Within my heart a secret world I have,
And as I am, so is it foul or fair.
Alas! why do I look so little there?
Alas! why do I look so much without?

JULIA KAVANAGH.

ROBERT BROWNING.

"Stand still, true poet that you are,
 I know you ; let me try and draw you.
 Some night you'll fail us. When afar
 You rise, remember one man saw you,
 Knew you, and named a star."

A SMALL packet of old yellow letters lies before me as I write, the writing in faded ink. The packet is labelled "from Robert Browning," the letters are addressed to my father, the Rev. W. J. Fox. The date of the earliest of these notes is the year 1833. My father was, at that time, editor of the *Monthly Repository*, a periodical which he endeavoured to raise from its original denominational character into a first-class literary and political journal. It was the forerunner of many similar such, but in its day it stood almost if not quite alone, and like other forerunners was distinctly in advance of its time.

In this periodical did Mr. Browning's earliest work "Pauline" receive its first public recognition in the April No. of the volume for 1833, that is, immediately on publication ; while "Paracelsus" was welcomed in the volume for 1835, also as soon as published. The articles were both from the pen of Mr. Fox.

I will quote a few sentences from them, but they would both well bear republication in full. In the first article, the one on "Pauline ; a confession," after a careful analysis of the young author's mental stages and their progress, Mr. Fox continues thus :—"The poem, in which a great poet should reveal the whole of himself to mankind would be a study, a delight, and a power, for which there is yet no parallel ; and around which the noblest creations of the noblest writers would range themselves as subsidiary luminaries.

"These thoughts have been suggested by the work before us, which, though evidently a hasty and imperfect sketch, has truth and life in it, which gave us the thrill, and laid hold of us with the power, the sensation of which has never yet failed us as a test of genius. Whoever the anonymous author may be, he is a poet. A pretender to science cannot always be safely judged of by a brief publication, for the knowledge of some facts does not imply the knowledge of other facts ; but the claimant of poetic honours may generally be appreciated by a few pages, often by a few lines ; for if they be poetry, he is a poet. We cannot judge of the house by the brick, but we can judge of the statue of Hercules by its foot. We felt certain of Tennyson, before we saw the book, by a few verses which had straggled into a newspaper ; we are not less certain of the author of 'Pauline.'

Mr. Fox proceeds to give many quotations, interspersed with admiring and appreciative comments ; towards the close of the

article he makes some small criticisms, after which he concludes with the following words—"In recognising a poet we cannot stand upon trifles, nor fret ourselves about such matters. Time enough for that afterwards, when larger works come before us. Archimedes in the bath had many particulars to settle about specific gravities, and Hiero's crown; but he first gave a glorious leap and shouted Eureka!"

This full and complete recognition of the first effort of the young poet was never forgotten by Mr. Browning, and was often, and often, referred to by him in later life with touching affection and gratitude. He says in a note (my third in date), "I can only offer you my simple thanks, but they are of the sort that one can give only once or twice in a life. All things considered, I think you are almost repaid if you imagine what I must feel. As for the book, I hope ere long to better it." And, again, in another note, still of the year 1833: "I shall never write a line without thinking of the source of my first praise, be assured."

I have omitted to mention the earliest notes of my treasured little packet. The first is a most characteristic one introducing himself to Mr. Fox, and the next is written to accompany a packet of twelve copies of "Pauline" (the recipient has written outside "the Pauline parcel has arrived"). One of those twelve copies lies before me at this moment, in its original dull drab binding; a second was sent to Mr. John Stuart Mill, who was, at that time, writing some admirable articles for the *Monthly Repository* for my father, signed A (or Antiquas) on the Greek Philosophers. Mr. Browning's signature to his contributions was Z. Mr. Mill, apparently at my father's request, wrote a review of "Pauline" for the *Examiner*, which that paper declined; and Mr. Mill in his note (which lies before me) says that he shall send his review to *Tait*. Those were the days before Mr. John Forster was literary editor of the *Examiner*; even, I think, before Mr. Forster had come to London. I know not what has become of the other ten copies, but can only hope they have been treasured as mine has by me.

In the March of 1835 "Paracelsus" appeared, and was noticed by Mr. Fox, before the end of that year, in the *Monthly Repository* in a careful and appreciative analysis. He speaks of the author as having in this work, " essayed the solution of one of those great enigmas, which human life in its different phases presents."

He continues: "His 'Paracelsus' is, not a personification indeed, but an individualisation of humanity, in whom he exhibits its alternate conditions of aspiration and attainment. Truly here is something for the mind to grapple with; but the labour is only of that species which accords with the proper enjoyment of poetry, and which raises that enjoyment to its due degree of loftiness and intensity. Paracelsus left that sort of mingled reputation which exactly suited the author's purpose. It is neither too bad for a blessing, nor too good for a curse."

After copious quotations the article concludes thus: "Our task has been performed rather as expositors than as judges. To take up a book, and that book a poem, with real mental matter in it, is a novelty which calls more for announcement than for criticism. Would that we had oftener occasion for the implied praise and admiration which belong to the record of such a fact. . . . Yet, though possessing little of that species of stimulus which gains sudden popularity, there is abundance of a higher and stronger stimulus in this poem. We now leave it to speak for itself, and fancy its coming into the world, as Brutus did into the rostrum, with the appeal, 'Censure me in your judgments; and awake your senses that you may the better judge.'"

After long years of neglect the public at last responded to that appeal. Those who have learned to admire Browning's noble poetry have indeed had to "awake their senses," in order to be able to appreciate his pregnant and thoughtful work.

Immediately before the publication of "Paracelsus," Mr. Browning writes to Mr. Fox, that he hopes his poem "will turn out not utterly unworthy your kind interest, and more deserving your favour" than anything that Mr. Fox had yet seen; adding, "it will never do for one so distinguished by past praise to prove nobody after all." This note seems to be in reply to one from Mr. Fox, who had obtained for him an introduction to Moxon, who however, could not be prevailed on to publish "Paracelsus." Mr. Moxon had, apparently, burnt his fingers with the early works of two poets, both of them since taking first rank, and he begged to decline even inspecting Mr. Browning's poem. Messrs. Saunders and Ottley too, who had previously published Pauline, I believe at the author's own risk, were applied to in vain; when Mr. Fox bethought him of that ultra liberal, Effingham Wilson, whose name finally, is found on the title page of the first edition of "Paracelsus."

After the notice of "Paracelsus," Mr. Browning writes: "Sardanapalus could not go on multiplying kingdoms, nor I protestations—but I thank you very much."

Four of Mr. Browning's shorter poems made their first appearance on the pages of the *Monthly Repository*. In 1835 "The King," which was introduced afterwards in "Pippa Passes," as one of Pippa's songs; those songs that effect such momentous changes in the current of the lives of the hearers, all unconsciously to the little silk-winder of Asolo passing by. "Porphyria," which re-appears in the first number of *Dramatic Lyrics* (original edition) under the title of "Madhouse Cells," and *Agricola*, which appears in the *Collected Works*; all of these first saw the light in the *Monthly Repository* Volume for 1836. The fourth, a charming sonnet, somewhat Heine-like in character, to be found in the *Monthly Repository* Volume for 1834, I have not seen again in any of the later editions of the Poet's works. Why I know not, for it deserves not to be lost.

Shortly before the notice of "Pauline," there appears a delightful recognition of Tennyson, whose second little volume, "Poems, chiefly Lyrical," had then just appeared, also from the pen of Mr. Fox.

On May 1st, 1837, "Strafford; an historical tragedy," was produced at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, through Mr. Macready's agency; he taking the title part, and Miss Helen Faucit the Countess of Carlisle. I am under the impression that my father introduced both the poet and the play to Mr. Macready, with whom he was on terms of intimacy. My father wrote a critique on the play, as it was acted. I find Mr. Browning sadly annoyed at the "considerable alterations" which were made for acting. He says "the complexion of the piece, is I grieve to say, perfect gallows:" and the acting of the King (which very difficult part it seems to my humble judgment would have required a second Macready to do justice to) was such, that the note leaves it with a dash, as too bad to be described.

In a letter to a relative, from an early friend who was present, I find the performance referred to amongst the London news, so dear at that date to country cousins, in the following interesting passage:

"Then, *Strafford*: were you not pleased to hear of the success of one you must I think remember a very little boy, years ago. If not, you have often heard us speak of Robert Browning, and it is a great thing to have accomplished a successful tragedy, although he seems a good deal annoyed at the go of things behind the scenes, and declares he will never write a play again as long as he lives. You have no idea of the ignorance and obstinacy of the whole set, with here and there an exception: think of his having to write out the meaning of the word *impeachment*, as some of them thought it meant *poaching*."

In 1841, the first number of those delightful "Bells and Pomegranates" appeared, the title of which was such a perpetual puzzle, both to critics and the public; recurring as it regularly did each year with a fresh number, until with the "Soul's Tragedy," the eighth and last, an explanation was appended. One of these only, appears to have been acted simultaneously with its publication, as "Strafford" was; namely: "The Blot on the 'Scutcheon," which bears date, "Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. February 11th, 1843." In this play, Macready took the part of Lord Thorold, the elder brother, on the first night of its representation only. I well remember his noble bearing, and dignified grace. It was, however, produced by him in the latter days of his management of Drury Lane, when worn out with fatigue and anxiety, he was unable to continue to sustain the part, and handed it over to Mr. Phelps for the remainder of the nights that the play ran.

It may perhaps be well for me to mention here that I have the first editions of each work before me, and copy the dates of each as I write; even to the original yellow paper covers of the "Bells and Pomegranates" (enriched with a few gracious words from Mr. Browning to my father on each).

As my memory glances back, and I try to recall my own early impressions of Mr. Browning, one bright morning rises up clear before me, like a sunlit spot through the long misty years. I see myself, a child, sitting drawing at a sunny cottage window in the then rural suburb of Bayswater. Puffs of sweet scents of hawthorn and roses came floating in at the open window as I drew. I remember that I was trying to copy Retsch's design of a young knight surrounded by Undines, who seek to entice him down with them into the waves, when Mr. Browning entered the little drawing-room, with a quick light step; and on hearing from me that my father was out, and in fact that nobody was at home except myself, he said: "It's my birthday to-day; I'll wait till they come in," and sitting down to the piano, he added: "If it wont disturb you, I'll play till they do." And as he turned to the instrument, the bells of some neighbouring church suddenly burst out with a frantic merry peal. It seemed to my childish fancy, as if in response to the remark that it was his birthday. He was then slim and dark, and very handsome; and—may I hint it—just a trifle of a dandy, addicted to lemon-coloured kid gloves and such things: quite "the glass of fashion and the mould of form." But full of ambition, eager for success, eager for fame, and what's more, determined to conquer fame and to achieve success. Soon after these first publications, he writes to a friend: "I have a headful of projects—mean to song-write, play-write forthwith." And again: "When these three plays are out, I hope to build a huge Ode—but all goeth but (with) God's will."

I think it must have been a year or two later, that I remember him as looking in often in the evenings, having just returned from his first visit to Venice. I cannot tell the date for certain. He was full of enthusiasm for that Queen of Cities. He used to illustrate his glowing descriptions of its beauties, the palaces, the sunsets, the moon-rises, by a most original kind of etching. Taking up a bit of stray note-paper, he would hold it over a lighted candle, moving the paper about gently till it was cloudily smoked over, and then utilizing the darker smears for clouds, shadows, water, or what not; would etch with a dry pen the forms of lights on cloud and palace, on bridge or gondola on the vague and dreamy surface he had produced.

My own passionate longing to see Venice dates from those delightful well-remembered evenings of my childhood.

My father had given up the editorship of the *Monthly Repository*, in 1836, to R. H. Horne, the author of "Orion," and to Leigh Hunt, with the latter of whom the journal died a natural death, two years later. My father became absorbed in political life, which occupied him incessantly from that time onwards. His name is known to the public in conjunction with those of Cobden and Bright in the great Anti-Corn Law struggle, and his pen was a weapon of power in many a goodly fight; but except in occasional lectures, the delights of purely literary work became a thing of the past. Still,

I do not remember the time, from the old *Repository* days onward, when a new poem by Browning was not an event and an excitement to him. One day, Mr. John Forster sent word that he would bring the proof-sheets of the "Christmas Eve" to read to us; and how we revelled in the humour of the opening passages; and how Mr. Forster's melodious voice did justice to the grand vision, as the poem proceeds!

In 1858-9 I paid a visit to Rome, where Mr. and Mrs. Browning were also spending the winter, on account of her health, and I saw a good deal of them; more especially, I had the great felicity of passing many quiet hours in the company of Mrs. Browning, for she kindly sat to me for her portrait in chalks; Mr. Browning the while, was giving his little son a first-rate music lesson in the adjoining room. The portrait, I may be excused for mentioning, was exhibited at the Royal Academy the same year, and was considered successful by most of those who knew her. She seemed to me to be an angel on earth, so modest, so unselfish.

At that time her poems were extremely popular, whilst Mr. Browning's were beginning only to take hold of the public. I remember his bringing in during my sittings, an American paper in which the work of the two poets were compared to the disadvantage of the husband. Mr. Browning seemed piqued, I thought, as was but natural; for the criticism showed both bad taste and want of judgment. But nothing of that sort could cast a shadow of a shade upon the perfect harmony that existed between that ideal pair. Theirs was the "better love" that could "defy the scoffer."

Mr. Browning lived chiefly abroad, and took no great interest in the details of English politics, saving all political enthusiasm, either for the land of his adoption or for the affairs of past times.

But the early regard between him and my father was not dead, only slumbering. I find in my packet a long letter from Mrs. Browning to my father (under date June, 1859) about Italian matters, enclosing a cutting from an Italian newspaper, a translation into Italian of a public speech of my father's to a meeting at Oldham, which had given great satisfaction to Italian patriots.

Mrs. Browning writes to thank him "for her husband, for herself, and for Italy," for this speech on the Italian Question. She says: "One generous voice raised, and that such a thrilling voice as yours, is indeed a thing to thank God for, after all the disappointments, and, let me add, the humiliation we suffer here as to the words and acts of England."

I open also a sort of double letter, written partly by Mr. and partly by Mrs. Browning; a delightful letter from Casa Guidi, date January, 1857, on learning from Mr. Fox of his re-election as member for Oldham. Mr. Browning writes: "I wish from my heart we could get closer together again, as in those old days, and what times we would have here together in Italy"; and after a page of most delightful joking he adds: "I say this foolishly, just because

I can't trust myself to be earnest about it. I would, you know I would, always would, choose you out of the whole English world to judge and correct what I write myself. My wife shall read this, and let it stand, if I have told her so, these twelve years; and certainly I have not grown intellectually an inch over the good and kind hand you extended over my head, how many years ago!"

The letter is long, too long to quote in this place; after speaking of English books and newspapers, or rather the want of them in Italy, Mr. Browning adds: "Yet for me there would be one book better than any now to be got, here or elsewhere, and all out of a great English head and heart—those "Memoirs" you engaged to give us. Will you give us them?"

Those memoirs, alas! were never written. He that should have written, and he that would have read them, both now rest beneath the sod. My father died in 1864:—

"The poet died last month, and now
The world which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,
Commands the palms."

E. F. BRIDELL-FOX.

LOCH KATRINE.

I.

How calm and fair, how very fair thy face
That August evening when I saw thee first!
Thy glorious beauty like a vision burst
Full on me, and I lingered for a space,
Breathing the soft enchantment of the place,
To feel myself in fairyland, immersed
In lore and legend of an age that nursed
The finer fortunes of a fairy race.
Ben A'an and Ben Venue had held me bound
In loving reverence and in awe made sweet
By all the beauty of the nearer ground,
The Trossachs, rising lovely from my feet;
But that first gleam of thee, that sudden sight,
Filled me and overwhelmed me with delight.

II.

Wearing thy poet's praises as a crown,
Thy beauty crowns him with its own excess,
And if he gave thee glory, thou no less
Hast given him profusely of thine own;
Thy fame and his, inseparably grown,
And thine and Ellen's loveliness, express
One immortality, one loveliness,
Whereof we see the sum in thee alone.
Loch of the lovely isle and silver strand,
In whose bright waves new beauty ever breaks,
In whose deep heart, where cloud and sky expand,
Perpetual joy, perpetual music wakes,
Fairer than all thy sisters in the land,
Thou art thyself the Lady of the Lakes!

GEORGE COTTERELL.

"JOHN SMITH, JUNIOR."

By E. J. CLAYDEN.

I.

"I HOPE, Edith, if I send you to school in Paris for a couple of years, you won't come back with your head stuffed as full of nonsense as your sister's is. Let no more be said about it; if we have the party at all, I intend the Smiths to be invited. Tell Frances her fine friends may stop away if she thinks the company will be too mixed for their notions. Now, my dears, don't hinder me any longer, I ought to have been off an hour ago."

So saying, Dr. Lisle left the room; a moment later the front door banged and the brougham drove away.

"Then I suppose I had better write the card, mamma?" asked Edith, a young girl who was seated at a writing-table covered with cards and envelopes which she was filling up and addressing.

"Yes, my dear," replied a little delicate-looking middle-aged lady who sat near her. "I am sorry Francie should be vexed, but papa is quite right; the Smiths have been so exceedingly kind and polite, we really ought to show them what civility we can. I am sure the dinner they gave us the other night was splendid. Of course they won't expect us to return their hospitality in anything like the same lavish manner; they know we are not millionaires."

"Francie says she wishes Mr. Smith had not taken it into his head to fall down and break his leg at his shop instead of in his own home, where his own doctor could have attended him."

"I am sorry Frances is so foolish. It was very lucky that papa happened to be the nearest medical man who could be found, for it led to his becoming the regular doctor to their establishment; an appointment not at all to be despised. They both took a great fancy to him—papa is always a favourite wherever he goes."

"I believe Mrs. Smith thinks that but for papa her husband would never have walked again!" said Edith, laughing.

"All the more fortunate for us; they are most desirable patients."

"Of whom are you talking?" asked a tall, striking-looking girl, who had entered the room quietly and overheard the last few words.

"Of the Smiths," replied her sister; "they are to come, Francie. So now the question is, do you prefer to leave out your grand friends, Mr. and Miss Fitzhardy?"

The other flushed slightly, and drew herself up with great dignity. "I hardly see how we can do that; unfortunately I mentioned the party to Alicia just now, though what she will think of being asked to meet 'Smith and Trewson,' I am afraid to contemplate."

"Break the awful news gently—beforehand," said Edith; but her sister ignored the interruption and continued speaking to her mother.

"Alicia dropped me at our door on her way home."

"Have you had a pleasant drive?" asked Mrs. Lisle. "I suppose the Park was very full."

"And you had the delightful society of your elderly beau also, no doubt," put in Edith pertly, her bright face beaming with mischief.

Frances grew redder and still more dignified. "Edith!—how vulgar! It seems to me that during the two years I have been abroad our circle of friends has widened in a way which may be indicated by the tone of your manners. Papa will not see that people may be very desirable as patients and yet altogether the opposite as intimates. If he is really going to send you to 'Madame' he had better make haste and do so before you are hopelessly contaminated."

Edith pursed up her pretty red lips and tossed her curly head defiantly before she replied

"When I come back," she said, "I am not going to put up with any of your dull old middle-aged lovers, I can tell you, no matter how rich, or how literary, or how aristocratic!—Oh, Francie!—you ought to have the most charming lover in the world!—rich, of course—if you can get him—but young and handsome and clever, at least. Oughtn't she, mamma?—Our pretty Frances!"

The mother smiled fondly and proudly upon her two bonny girls, and patted the younger one's chestnut curls.

"What a little goose it is!—You are both much too young to be thinking about lovers; you especially, Edith, with the prospect of another two years of school-life before you. Francie must please herself, you know. Mr. Fitzhardy is an exceedingly clever and interesting man; I don't at all wonder Frances likes him. And then, remember, his sister is her dearest friend."

"Yes," said Frances, "and see how good he is to her. It is not every man who would make so much of a half-sister twenty years younger than himself. What a splendid position she has as mistress of his house. Ample means, carriages and horses, plenty of servants, and a large circle of friends among the most refined and cultivated people in London."

"Oh, I don't deny he is a charming brother," said Edith. "I was looking at him as a possible lover, a capacity in which I for my part could not tolerate him for one moment. Why, he's getting bald!"

Mrs. Lisle laughed, but Frances rose, much irritated.

"What has that got to do with it?—and who says he is any one's lover?"

"I do," replied Edith, imperturbably. "I'll bet you anything you like, he is in love with you."

Frances gave her sister a look of unfathomable disgust, but Mrs.

Lisle only smothered a smile and gave utterance to a feeble remonstrance. "Oh, Edith—my *dear*!"

"Wait and see—wait and see!" laughed that young lady. "I wish you joy of your taste, Frances. For my part, I don't care quite so much about brains if they are covered with plenty of nice thick hair—dark, I think, and curly—and the head carried straight and steady, well up in the air. Why do so many literary men stoop; is it because they are always poking their noses into ink-bottles?"

But Frances had left the room without condescending to utter another word.

"And now, Edith," said Mrs. Lisle, "having driven your sister away by your nonsense, you had better make haste and finish those invitations. You have not been quite kind to Frances, my dear."

"Oh, mamma!—I can't bear to see her throwing herself away on that old prig! Do you think she really cares for him? She can't, surely?"

"He is a good man, Edith, greatly respected; and just now, you know, Frances thinks so much of intellect and cultivation, and all that kind of thing. You must stop these jokes, they are not in good taste. Your father and I ought to be very thankful to see the chance of such a safe and comfortable future offered to one of our girls. There are so many of you, Edith!"

"Ah, yes;—eight girls! But Francie ought to be able to choose anywhere, mamma, with her face and figure!"

"She has nothing else, my dear, and young men want so much now-a-days."

Later on, when Dr. Lisle had returned from his round, dined, and established himself in an easy chair with his cigar, he said to his wife, who sat by him:

"I can't think what is the matter with Frances. She seems to me to have come back from France quite another girl. I never thought a daughter of mine could be so foolish. She takes everyone's measure, and then, if they don't come quite up to her standard, there is no getting her to be civil. This one is 'not quite a lady,' and the other 'no gentleman;' another, 'most uncultivated;' the next, 'utterly commonplace,' or 'sadly lacking in refinement,' or 'wanting in fine feeling.' I hate such sentimental rubbish! You've got to take people as you find them and make the best of them—a doctor has, any way—and it's hard then if you can't find something good in most of them. Is it all owing to the Fitzhardy influence? I can't think so, the man appears to me to be a decent fellow. I say, Milly, he called on me this morning; did you know?"

"No; Oh, William—was it about Francie?"

"Yes; he asked me for her. Of course I told him she would not have anything; he said he didn't care, and he offered to make a very handsome settlement. He is a gentleman, Milly, but I wish—why, he is double her age, or more!"

"It would be a great comfort to see Frances provided for, William; think of all the others —"

"I don't forget them, my dear, you may be sure. I ought to be thankful, no doubt. I don't like that sister—she's a regular stuck up little fool!—Oh, by the way, look what I got just now from Smith. Isn't he a brick? I sent in his bill the other day—he has asked for it several times—and just see, he has doubled the amount, and sent me such a kind note: 'never can show his gratitude,' and so on. That's a patient worth having. Give me a man who knows how to spend his money, and I'll forgive him for making it so inordinately fast."

II.

THE night of the party arrived. Dr. Lisle's house was lit up from roof to basement, carriages and cabs steadily deposited their occupants at the door, and the large double drawing-rooms were filling fast. Among the earliest arrivals were Mr. and Miss Fitzhardy. Frances contrived to whisper to her dear friend that they had been obliged to ask Mr. and Mrs. Smith, "of Smith and Trewson, you know."

"Oh, dear, how amusing," said that young lady; "I get all my frocks there! Pray don't distress yourself, Frances; you need not mention our name to them. I think it is rather fun. What are they like? Are they here now?"

"No," said Frances, delighted to see that her august visitor took the matter so affably.

"Do you know, I am quite curious to see them, Frances," Miss Fitzhardy went on, with a little laugh. "I don't think I ever met people of that sort out anywhere before." A remark which, although uttered in the most innocent manner, sent a sudden flood of crimson over Frances's fair face and neck, and she was glad enough to turn to Mr. Fitzhardy and hear what he had to say about a new collection of pictures he had been inspecting that afternoon.

Meanwhile the crowd grew thicker and thicker, and the hum of voices louder and louder. Someone was playing a florid piece on the grand piano in the larger room, but Frances, at the other end of the small drawing-room could hear little of the performance above the hubbub of conversation. Suddenly she caught her mother's eye, evidently searching for her. She made her way to her as quickly as she could.

"Frances," whispered Mrs. Lisle, "you must come and be introduced to Mrs. Smith; remember she knows no one here. I want you to come and talk to her."

A minute later the girl found herself seated by a stout elderly lady in a rich velvet dress, adorned with lovely lace, which was fastened at the throat by a magnificent diamond ornament. Above this elegant finery beamed a large, round, rosy, good-humoured face.

"I'm glad to make your acquaintance, my dear," she said. "I've

heard about you from your pa—and mighty proud he is of you, I'm sure—something like I am of my Johnny—that's my son, you know—the only one living out of ten I've had, so you can't wonder I think a lot of him."

Frances had no reply ready; none was needed, for Mrs. Smith, feeling herself upon an inexhaustible subject, continued without pausing longer than to take breath.

"I daresay you think it's funny for me to call my son 'Johnny,' and he such a fine up-grown young fellow, and taken his degree and all that—but you see Mr. Smith is 'John' and Johnny he's 'John' too. His father calls him 'Jack,' but that I never could take to, because, long ago, when I was a girl and lived in the country—before I came to London to business—I had a pet jackdaw, and I used always to call him 'Jack'—so tame he was too, he would come and perch on my shoulder! After that I never could think of giving a christian the same name; so Johnny's been 'Johnny' all his life and will be now till the end of the chapter, I expect."

She paused again to take breath and then went off on another tack. "So kind of your ma to ask us here. We think everything of Dr. Lisle, you know; there's just nobody like him. And to think that poor Mr. Smith might have been a cripple all his days through such a little thing as a bit of grease dropped on the stairs!"

Here Frances ventured to suggest that the fracture might have been equally well attended to by some other medical man; a remark Mrs. Smith negatived at once, with a very knowing shake of the head. Then she resumed the conversation by reverting to the topic which was never far from her thoughts.

"It so happened that Johnny came home to-day, him and his great friend, Mr. Josselyn. They've been travelling together on the Continent ever since they left college. We couldn't leave them at home alone the very first evening, so we took the liberty of bringing them with us. Why here they are, I declare, and your ma too."

"Frances," said Mrs. Lisle, "I want to introduce Mr. John Smith, Junior, to you, and his friend, Mr. Josselyn—my eldest daughter, Miss Lisle."

Mrs. Lisle then sank into the chair by Mrs. Smith which Frances vacated and left the girl face to face with two young men. One tall, fair and distinguished-looking, the other short, and dark, with a clean-shaven, clever face, and wearing double eye-glasses. The latter began the conversation, as his friend stood by, twirling his long fair moustache in some slight embarrassment. After exchanging a few common-places, Frances seized an opportunity to move on and speak to other visitors. As soon as she was out of hearing, the tall young man caught his friend by the arm. "By Jove, Jack, isn't she a lovely girl! We haven't seen a face like that in all our travels. What a shapely head—what rich auburn hair! Did you ever see more liquid brown eyes? and the lashes are ——"

But his rhapsody was cut short by his companion turning on his heel with a muttered—"Humph! Proud as Lucifer!"

Presently Frances came close to her father, who was talking to a tall, stout, broadly-built man, with thick curly grey hair and a very red face.

"Yes, doctor," he was saying, "he's a fine young fellow and I'm very glad and proud for Jack to have such a friend. Oh, yes, he's the Wrangler—'Erbert John Moreton Josselyn. Capital name, isn't it? Now I think a good high-sounding name is a fine thing for a man. Look at me—'John Smith' might be anybody—or nobody! That's why I have the 'Trewson' in the firm. When a man hears 'Smith and Trewson,' he knows all about me—and that's what I like. But bless you, there isn't any 'Trewson' at all, really—it was my good wife's maiden name. When we began business together we were 'Smith and Trewson,' you see. Then there's my boy—he's 'John Smith' too, his mother would have it so, bless her—plain 'John Smith' had been good enough for his father, and ought to be for him. I wanted to put in the 'Trewson,' but she wouldn't hear of it. Then I thought I'd call him 'Wolvercourt,' after his godfather, our good parson—a real gentleman, and no mistake—but there again, the missis, dear soul, didn't like to, for fear the old gentleman should think it presuming on his kindness. Wish we had, now, you know. 'John Smith' isn't the name to carry a man into Parliament. But there, some day he shall buy a big estate somewhere and call himself after it, if he likes. After all it isn't the name that matters so much as the amount of 'backing up' you can give it."

"By the way, Mr. Smith," interrupted the doctor, "I should like to introduce you to Mr. Fitzhardy—Augustus Fitzhardy, you know—he is very much interested in the Society we were talking about just now; in fact, I believe he is one of the honorary secretaries."

"Oh, indeed," replied Mr. Smith. "Fitzhardy—Fitzhardy—no I don't know the name. I once knew a *Mac*-hardy, a fellow who served in our shop, and ran away with ——"

"Mr. Augustus Fitzhardy is the editor of the 'World-Wide.'"

"Indeed!—Ah, you see, I'm not much of a newspaper reader; don't go in for politics and that kind of thing; like a good novel when business is over, but ——"

"Oh," put in Dr. Lisle meekly, "it isn't a newspaper, it's a magazine—a review—the chief literary organ ——"

But Frances would hear no more; she sought out her bosom friend.

"Frances," said that young lady, "who is that delightfully handsome young man I saw you talking to just now? There was a little dark man with him whose face interested me very much."

"It must have been Mr. John Smith, Junior, and his friend Mr. Josselyn," said Frances.

"Josselyn—what Josselyn? I wonder if he belongs to the Sussex

family. One of them was fourth Wrangler last year. Herbert, I think he was called—yes, Herbert John Moreton Josselyn."

"This is he. There is mamma, Alicia, you had better ask her to introduce him to you."

Shortly afterwards Frances found the tall handsome stranger at her elbow, inquiring if he might take her down to get an ice. She was not unwilling, and when, on their way upstairs again he remarked that the rooms were suffocatingly hot and that the tiny conservatory looked a tempting contrast, she suffered herself to be led inside and seated in a shady corner on a low lounge which just held two.

The account he gave her of his and his friend's travels must have been very interesting, for when, an hour or so later, Mr. Fitzhardy hunted her up to make his adieux, she was astonished to find how the time had slipped away. He, poor man, had some reason to feel that he had been rather badly treated. He had come there that evening hoping to further assure himself that he must receive a satisfactory answer to the question he was now only waiting a favourable opportunity to put; and behold, the lady of his love was spending most of her time sitting in a quiet nook with an exceedingly dangerous-looking companion—from his point of view.

Frances felt quite sorry the evening was over. When she reached her own room, before divesting herself of her finery, she stood for a moment or two before her looking-glass. It was certainly a graceful reflection that met her eyes; a slender form clothed in soft creamy silk, a rich white neck against which lay a large cluster of sweet gloire de Dijon roses, a small head adorned with thick coils of shining hair turned simply off from a low white forehead, delicately marked eyebrows and long thick lashes shading a pair of clear brown eyes, a small sensitive mouth and straight, well-cut nose. That the picture was so far satisfactory seemed evident from the slight sigh with which she turned away and began drawing off her long gloves. Then she unfastened the roses from her bosom and held them to her face again and again, as if she could not have enough of their fragrance, afterwards putting them carefully in water, lingering over the task as if the sight and scent of them recalled something pleasant to her mind.

The next afternoon Mrs. Lisle and Frances went out to pay some calls, and on their return found two visitors' cards on the hall table and with them a basket of exquisite Gloire de Dijon roses. Mrs. Lisle took up the cards and read "Herbert J. Moreton Josselyn," and "John Smith, Junr."

Edith came flying down the stairs two at a time.

"Oh, Francie, the roses are for you. Aren't they lovely? Two gentlemen brought them, I met them on the doorstep—they came in a cab—I was just coming in from the Square with the little ones. The one who had the flowers was such a handsome fellow—he said to me, 'Are you one of the Miss Lisles?' so I said, 'Yes, I'm Edith

then he said, 'I have brought some flowers for your sister; we were talking about roses last night and she said that these were her favourite sort. I told her I was sure she had never seen any to beat those at 'The Grange' now. These are to prove the truth of my assertion.' So there—I've delivered my message and I think you ought to give me one of the roses for remembering it all."

"You are welcome to as many as you like," said Frances coldly. "I'm sure I don't want the Smiths' flowers," and she turned away and walked upstairs with a considerably heightened colour in her proud young face.

Mrs. Lisle told her husband of this little incident during their usual short after-dinner chat.

"Ah!" said he, between the puffs at his cigar, "I thought those two young people seemed rather struck with each other. Now Milly, let nothing be said to Frances. Tell Edith, I forbid any chaffing or teasing, she'd better not mention his name even. That girl is a mischievous little spoil-sport. Leave things to take a natural course. Why—it would be a match after my own heart! I don't mind confessing, I never did altogether take to the other. Did you notice how completely Fitzhardy was left out in the cold last night?"

Meanwhile, Edith was by no means above availing herself of her sister's permission.

"Second-hand presents are better than none," she said, as she pinned a choice bud or two into the front of her frock. "I wonder if I shall have baskets of roses brought me when I am grown up. I'm afraid not; I shall never be a beauty like Frances."

She might have thought differently had she overheard a remark one young man made to the other as they left the Square behind them that afternoon.

"I say, Jack—talk of that tall pale girl last night—what do you think of the younger sister?"

"She looks a jolly little thing," he replied. "It's an indescribably lovable, happy little face, and quite unconscious of its own charm; whereas, Miss Lisle knows her market value only too well——"

"Jack! you are coarse!" his friend interrupted, hotly.

The only answer was a long-drawn expressive whistle; then there was a short pause, after which the subject was changed.

III.

DURING the next few weeks it seemed to Frances that she was constantly coming across the tall, handsome young man between whom and herself there had sprung up such a decided liking, almost at first sight. The intimacy grew and strengthened at every meeting. He was invariably accompanied by his great friend. Undoubtedly Mr. John Smith, Junior was to be seen in the most irreproachable society. Perhaps it was due to Josselyn's superior social standing; he

probably took young Smith everywhere as his friend, and as he certainly behaved like a gentleman, no awkward questions were asked.

Fastidious, exclusive Frances felt some surprise at this, which reached its culmination when she met them at last at the house of that even more exclusive young lady, Miss Fitzhardy. She could not resist making a remark on the subject to Alicia when the two girls were talking over the party next day, while they sipped their afternoon tea.

"Why, my dear child," she replied, "they go everywhere. The two are inseparable, and, you know, young Smith is quite wonderful, considering. Of course he has nothing to do with the business. I suppose he will be enormously rich," she added with a sigh; "his father intends him to go into Parliament, and they say he is really very clever. As for Mr. Josselyn, everybody knows who he is; and oh, Frances, is he not—truly—delightful?"

Frances looked up quickly—surely Alicia was blushing. What did it mean? She felt a sudden sharp pang of jealousy. With this strange, new pain at her heart she could no longer bear going over and over the trivial details of last night's entertainment; so she got away from her friend as soon as she could find a decent excuse, and went home.

On her arrival she went straight up into the drawing-room, and found Mrs. Lisle and Edith alone over the remains of the tea.

"I wish you had been at home, Francie," said her mother. "Mr. John Smith, Junior, and Mr. Josselyn have just been here, and we have given them some tea. Have you had yours, or shall I put a little more hot water into the pot and give you a cup?"

Frances could scarcely intimate that she had already taken tea when Edith rushed into the conversation with, "Oh, Frances, how nice he is!—Mr. Josselyn, I mean. He talked to me all the time. I was quite afraid of him at first, because he is so dreadfully clever, but he was awfully jolly—I think he is quite the nicest young man I ever saw; and what do you think, he says if I do go to Passy he hopes he may see something of me, because he will probably be in Paris all next winter."

Poor Frances could say nothing, her mind was in a tumult, jealousy was rampant now. What did it all mean? What right had he to bring the blush to Alicia's cheek, and to come putting ideas into the head of a bit of a girl like Edith, when all the while——? Oh! he must be a flirt—a flirt!

Then the thought of poor Mr. Fitzhardy flashed across her; perhaps he had some right to accuse her of flirting. Yet the encouragement she gave him had been very lukewarm at its best—she knew now that she had never cared for him, except as an agreeable acquaintance. But for this other?—well, when they next met she would show him how lightly she held attentions so profusely scattered around.

She had not long to wait for an opportunity. They met that

evening at a grand ball given by one of Dr. Lisle's most aristocratic patients. Frances found it rather dull. She had danced half through her programme with one uninteresting stranger after another and was beginning to vote the whole affair a bore, when a familiar voice behind her said: "What, Miss Lisle!—well I am glad. How do you do? Is Mrs. Lisle here?"

"Yes, and papa too," she replied, forgetting all her plans of revenge at the first glance from those honest grey eyes, whose every look she was learning to know so well.

"And have you any dances left? I hope I am not too late. Jack and I have been doing duty at a stupid city dinner."

"I have one or two, I think," said Frances, feeling for her programme. It could not be found; the cord and pencil were there, but the card had been torn off.

"I must have lost it," she said, "how very awkward."

"Do you remember to whom you were engaged?"

"Not a bit, they were all strangers. I know hardly anyone here."

"Nor do I. I have a happy idea:—when anyone claims you whom you think looks stupid, say you are engaged to me. Do, please, it will be a real act of kindness, as I know no one."

Frances hesitated, but he looked so smiling and friendly that she smiled too; this he must have taken for consent, for he placed her hand on his arm and walked off with her to the ball-room, where they were just beginning a waltz; saying, as he did so: "And now I only hope and pray they may be all duffers!"

A son of the house, acting as master of the ceremonies, touched him on the shoulder: "Can I introduce you to any partners?"

"Not necessary," he replied; "my programme is full."

What a change had come over the scene! Surely the lights were brighter, the flowers sweeter, the gay costumes more dazzling, the strains of the band more exhilarating! After the dance he led her to her mother, and stayed by them all the rest of the evening. She danced once or twice with the partners who claimed her promise, because she felt ashamed to refuse one after the other; but he danced with no one else. She asked him at last, why he sat out so persistently.

"Because I want to enjoy myself thoroughly to-night," he replied, and Frances felt her colour come under the glance that accompanied the words. She forgot her jealousy, forgot even her remorse about poor Mr. Fitzhardy, and remembered only that she was happy; happy as she had never been in all her short young life before.

Then, when cloaked and hooded she followed her father and mother to their carriage, he was still there to offer her his arm and whisper "Thank you for a very happy evening." The hand-clasp which followed was undoubtedly far closer and longer than formality required.

A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Lisle took her two eldest daughters

to the Royal Academy. She was feeling very tired herself, so made no attempt to go the round of the galleries, but sat for the most part on one of the centre seats while the girls looked at the pictures.

They had not gone far before they came suddenly face to face with the two inseparables, Jack Smith and Jack Josselyn, as they were commonly called; and then, as so large a party cannot very well keep together in the Academy on a crowded afternoon, very soon the friends paired off—Frances with one of the gentlemen, Mrs. Lisle and Edith with the other.

Then followed a delightful hour for Frances. There is no more completely unfettered tête-à-tête than can be obtained in a crowded ball-room or assembly; the presence of the unheeding crowd only helps to remove all feeling of constraint. And so the two young people drew closer and closer to each other. Matter-of-fact words conveyed much more than their actual meaning, through the tones in which they were uttered and the looks that accompanied them. Frances began to wonder, half with hope and half with fear, what would be the next thing he might speak of. It came as a surprise to her.

"As this is your first visit here, you have not been in the later rooms yet; come with me; there is something I should like to show you in one of them."

After some dextrous edging through the crowd, Frances found herself in front of two large portraits. "Good heavens! Mr. and Mrs. Smith!"

"Well, what do you think of them?" said her companion. They were life-like, indeed, but there was a subtle "something" which was wanting. Frances hesitated; then she gave a little laugh, and said: "I don't know whether I may venture to say what I really think?"

"Certainly," he replied, looking slightly surprised, "or I should not have invited criticism. I think they are splendid."

"Yes, they are wonderful—Mr. and Mrs. Smith to the life but——" and here she dropped her voice to a confidential whisper—"minus their vulgarity."

He made no reply, so she added quickly: "I hope you don't mind my calling them vulgar; remember you drew it upon yourself, and of course I don't know how far you consider yourself bound to them——"

"Don't you?" he interrupted. "You must know that I am bound to them by the closest tie——"

"Of friendship with their son," she put in, eagerly, half vexed that he should take her words so seriously, when she had quite expected him to join her in laughing—not ill-naturedly—at the worthy couple's eccentricities. "But what of that? Of course you learned to know and like him at college, before you can have had any idea what his parents were like. Oh, it must be mere affection on your part not to own that the old people are odiously vulgar!"

"I know them to be unspeakably good, honest, hard-working and unselfish," was the answer.

"Oh, I daresay," she replied, with a little supercilious shrug of the shoulders, "but they haven't an 'H' between them, and I don't believe he has an idea outside 'Smith and Trewson,' or she one beyond her 'Johnny'——"

"She is one of the best of mothers!"

Frances only replied by another expressive movement, one of the affectations her sister so much despised, which she had picked up at that foreign "Ladies' Finishing School."

"I am sorry that you judge so entirely by the outer man—and woman. I confess I am surprised too. I understood that there was a very kindly feeling existing between your family and—and the Smiths."

"Oh, yes," said Frances. "I only speak for myself. I don't always share the views of my people. No, I admit, I shrink terribly from any want of refinement in my associates. And, perhaps," she went on, feeling rather nettled that he seemed to disagree with, and, indeed, disapprove of her remarks, "as we are on the subject, I may as well confess that I can't see very much to admire in the son—although he is your dearest friend. Everyone seems to find him wonderfully charming and clever and—and all that, but I don't."

"Oh," he returned at once, in a decidedly more cheerful manner, "Jack's a good fellow. He has brains too, and will make his mark, depend upon it."

"Perhaps; but his name is against him. Has it ever occurred to you to wonder what becomes of all the 'John Smiths' in the world? There must have been a great many, yet I never heard of one who did anything worth mentioning. You cannot imagine 'John Smith, Junior' a great statesman, or soldier, or author, or painter, or anything. No, no, the name is too utterly distinctive of the common-place."

He joined faintly in the merriment with which she uttered this sally, and then remarked:

"I allow the name has its drawbacks. For instance, it has struck me—more than once—lately—that a man ought to hesitate before asking a beautiful young lady if she could consent, for his sake, to become Mrs. John Smith, Junior."

The colour rushed into her face, but she laughed derisively: "Oh, dreadful!—she couldn't—I'm sure, she couldn't!"

"Yet Jack Smith can afford to give his wife nearly everything that the heart of woman can desire."

"Ah, money is a great temptation to some poor silly girls, I know."

"But to you?"

"It counts for nothing. How can you ask me such a question, Mr. Josselyn—I thought you knew me better." Her voice softened as she ended, she glanced up at him timidly, and was shocked to see that there was hardly a vestige of colour in his face.

"Are you ill?" she asked breathlessly. "Oh, what is the matter?"

"Nothing—nothing!" he replied, huskily, "the place is so hot and stuffy! Shall we return to Mrs. Lisle and your sister?"

Easier said than done; nowhere could they be found. Frances sat down in the vestibule, while her companion searched the rooms. Just as he returned with the information that they were certainly not there, his friend came rushing up the staircase and sought for readmittance at the turnstiles.

"Oh, Miss Lisle," he began, "I have just seen your mother and sister home. Mrs. Lisle turned very faint and I was obliged to get her out. We knew you were all right. The cab is still at the door; will you allow me to take you back also?"

"That is not necessary," Frances replied. "Poor mamma! she was over-tired. Thank you very much for looking after her."

The two young men accompanied her to the entrance, where the same offer of escort was again made and declined. There had been a lurking hope in the girl's mind that the other would volunteer his company: she was disappointed; he said hardly a word, and raised his hat as the cab drove away without again meeting her eyes.

"I suppose he is offended," she said to herself. "Well, I can't help it. After all it is better he should know the truth. I do hate all those Smiths, and could never tolerate so close an intimacy, if—! Poor, dear mamma!—I hope it is nothing serious."

Her fears on this head were soon set at rest by Edith, who met her in the hall.

"Oh, here you are, Francie. I hope you weren't frightened. Mamma is all right now, it was only the heat; but Mr. Josselyn thought we had better get home at once——"

"Mr. Josselyn!" said Frances, "how stupid you are, Edith. You mean——"

"I mean Mr. Josselyn, of course," Edith returned, rather indignantly; "it is you who are stupid, Frances——" She stopped abruptly, for her sister had grasped her arm and was gazing at her with pale face and wide-staring eyes. "What on earth is the matter, Francie? are you ill? I'll call papa——"

"Stop!" cried Frances, making a great effort to regain her self-possession, "call no one—tell me again—the one who was with you, the short one—is——?"

"Is Mr. Josselyn, of course, Francie. Are you out of your mind?"

"And the other——?"

"Is John Smith, Junior—you must know that. Oh, Francie! you frighten me! What has happened?"

"Nothing—only I have made a mistake, an awful mistake——" She was almost voiceless with horror, and her heart beat nearly to suffocation; she clutched at the frightened girl again. "Tell no one, Edith, do you hear? I forbid you to mention a word to mamma—or

anyone. I will never forgive you if you do—it would *kill* me! Let me go; leave me alone—quite alone, do you hear? Oh, go, go—there's a good girl, go! Oh, what have I done—what have I done—what have I done?"

And so, with dry, tearless eyes and tottering steps she passed on into the silence of her own little chamber.

IV.

"Johnny, love," said Mrs. Smith tenderly to her son, "what is the matter with you? Aren't you well, or is it some trouble? Come to me, my lad, and tell your old mother. I can't bear to see you looking like that. Tell me, dearie; father and I will do anything we can to make it all right."

He went and knelt down beside her, putting his arms round her substantial waist, and laying his head on her kind motherly bosom, just as if he were a boy again coming to the mother for comfort and consolation.

"Yes, dear old mamsy," he said, "I am in great trouble, but no one can help me; I must bear it alone. I will tell you, mother, because I want to go away again—I can't stay here—and you ought to know the reason. You will make it all right with my father, I know. I've fallen in love, mother, fallen in love, like a goose, and been cruelly disappointed."

"You mean the doctor's pretty daughter, don't you, Johnny? Why, father and I were so pleased, we thought——"

"Don't speak of her, mother," he broke in hoarsely. "I can't bear it. She despises us—a proud, disdainful coquette! How can I tell you the truth? She thought I was Josselyn; it was the man of birth and family, the scholar, she cared for, not me, the draper's son. She scorned the idea of being '*Mrs. John Smith, Junior!*' If you had only heard her say the words! So I am going away. Don't distress yourself, dear old mother, I shall soon get over it. You know the old song:—

'If she be not fair for me
What care I how fair she be?'

I am as much mistaken in her as she in me. Never fear that I am going to break my heart over a creature who only existed in my own imagination. And I fancied her so sweet, so pretty! I knew she was proud, and that her dainty head was full of false ideas about men and women and their true worth, but I thought she loved me and that love would open her heart and make her see more clearly what is really lovable."

"And, my dearie, my own lad, she does love you, I am sure of it. Ah!—I've seen the colour rush into her bonny face, and the light flash into her dark eyes, at the sound of your voice or your footstep.

No, no, Johnny, be patient, it will come all right. How could she mistake you for your friend?"

"I can't imagine; nothing was further from my thoughts. It came upon me like a clap of thunder."

Little more explanation was needed, and the next night saw the despised wooer on board the steamer swiftly crossing that strip of blue which separates us from other nations.

Meanwhile a dire calamity had fallen upon the Lises, in which poor Frances's own lesser trouble became swallowed up and unnoticed. Dr. Lisle caught a severe cold, which he neglected persistently for several days until suddenly pneumonia set in, and in a few hours he lay hovering between life and death. His poor wife was in an agony of grief and anxiety, which reached the pitch of despair when, after one short week of desperate fighting for life, death won the victory, and she found herself a widow.

The grief which completely broke the delicate feeble mother down gave Frances new strength. She took the whole burden on her young shoulders, made all the necessary arrangements for the funeral, and then faced the lawyer and the anxious question, what was to come next? It was discovered that very scanty provision had been made for them all. Dr. Lisle was a man in the prime of life. He had hoped to see all his girls well-educated, married, or otherwise put out in the world, and to save enough to retire upon in a modest way. But these hopes were nipped by his early death almost in their beginning, and poor Mrs. Lisle was left with an income of about two hundred pounds a year, and eight children, only one of whom, Frances, could be said to have completed her education. Frances felt that she must manage to earn money somehow or other at once to assist her mother and sisters. But how? Few questions, alas, more difficult. After everything had in turn been duly considered, there seemed nothing she was really fitted for. She did not even know enough to continue the education of her younger sisters, she had no special talent, and if earn she must, had yet to learn how to earn. In this dilemma one solution only offered itself. Mr. Fitzhardy generously came forward with the proposal which her changed manner had prevented him from making before. Frances could not help being deeply touched by the way in which the offer was made. The mother of his wife should never pinch or starve, he said, he would undertake to double the small means already at her disposal, and besides this, Edith should have that two years abroad which her father had promised her.

It was a sore temptation. Frances had no hope that she might ever be so fortunate as to regain the affection of the man she loved: she knew she had slain all that by one vain, foolish speech. He had gone away and would not come back until he was heart-whole again. But still—she loved him! She knew now that it was indeed John Smith, Junior, the draper's son, whom she—fastidious and refined

as she prided herself upon being—loved, with her whole soul and strength. Loving him so passionately, she dare not become the wife of another man. "I should despise myself," she thought, "I should grow to hate him." And so Mr. Fitzhardy had to take his refusal, softened by many expressions of regard and heartfelt thanks. When he pressed to know the reason—if there were anyone else—she stopped him, with pale lips, confessing falteringly, "Don't ask; I have been very unhappy; I have no heart to give—I shall never marry; or, at any rate, not for a very long time." And with this he had to be content.

Then came kind Mrs. Smith. Frances was obliged to see her, Mrs. Lisle being still quite unfit to face visitors. The good woman had come on a mission of friendliness. "I should like to get to the bottom of that business about Johnny," she said to herself, as she rolled along the road to town in her luxurious carriage. "There's a hitch somewhere, I'm sure; and what I've got to do is to find out where it is. I must try and make friends with the girl. Pretty dear!—I like her little haughty 'stand off' ways; my Johnny deserves a wife who can hold her head high—he's a gentleman, bless him, and ought to marry a lady. I wonder if it's the shop that sticks in her throat?—or, perhaps, even—oh, nonsense! I can make her like us if I try, I'll be bound. I'll ask her to come and stay at 'The Grange' for a bit, just till they've had time to look about them. Poor dear Dr. Lisle!—what a mercy it was that Providence spared him until John's leg was nice and sound again." Here she wiped away a tear of gratitude.

In this mood, it was no wonder that Frances found her a most sympathetic listener to all the sad details of their loss. The girl met her in a softened state of feeling, too—compunction for the contemptuous manner in which she had spoken of the poor soul to her son; some natural tenderness towards the mother of the man she loved; as well as that stripping of conventionalities which is the common effect of the near approach of death, or any great sorrow. These made the innate craving in her for love and sympathy leap out towards that intense sympathy in poor vulgar Mrs. Smith, which brought the tears to her eyes and the quiver into her voice, and Frances recognised fully that it was possible to reap much comfort and consolation from words among which the letter "H" was chiefly conspicuous by its absence. Indeed, she hardly noticed now the deficiencies which had so often made her shudder; it was heart going out to heart, the weak and sorrow-stricken appealing to the strong and sympathetic. Mrs. Smith had tact, too: she said not a word of her son and his troubles, but simply drew the girl out to speak of her own griefs, and sorrowed with her. The question of a visit to "The Grange" was negatived at once. "I cannot spare the time," said Frances. "I must find employment of some kind without delay."

Here was a grand opportunity. "Then, my dear," replied her visitor, "I think I know exactly what will suit you. I am looking

out for a nice young lady to come and live with me, and be a—a daughter, to me, in fact. You see I am very lonely; Mr. Smith is away all day at business, and—and my son nearly always off on his travels; or if not, he has a man's place to make in the world, and can't be always tied to a tiresome old woman's apron-string. Now I want someone who will be tender to my failings, and put me in the right way too when I make little slips. Mr. Smith, he's so anxious for me to be all right, and somehow I think it's easier for the men; they're always out and about, noticing things. And the loneliness is trying. Ah!—it's not easy always to be happy, even in a big house, full of fine things, if you've nobody to love in it! I never was much of a hand at fancy-work; besides, what's the good, when I can buy it ever so much better done; nor books either, they do make me that sleepy! No! what I want is just something young and pretty about me to take an interest in. Now what do you say? You see you'd be earning something which would be a real help to your mother, and I can't tell you what a pleasure and comfort it would be to me to have your dear father's daughter by me, and try and return some of his great kindness to us. Say now, my dearie, will you come?"

And what could Frances do, but throw her arms round the good woman's neck, and press her sweet young lips to the fat red cheeks which looked so incongruous beneath that smart expensive bonnet, and sob out that she would do her very, very best, to be all that she wanted, for she never could show how grateful she was to her for her great goodness and sympathy.

V.

So it came to pass that before another week was out Frances found herself living in one of the most gorgeous houses she had ever seen, having the comforting assurance that she was leaving her family with a substantial addition to their narrow means, for Mr. and Mrs. Smith had behaved with unparalleled munificence in the matter of salary. Her heart went straight out to Jack's mother, and she had not been long under the same roof with his father before she discovered that a great deal of shrewd good sense, and much kindness of nature lay beneath the rough, somewhat bombastic outer man. Unconsciously the girl began to formulate a new creed—"True refinement may be found without much intellectual cultivation, and nobleness of nature does not always show itself in polished manners."

Before long, experience added another article of belief: it came about in this way. Going into the library one day to take a message from Mrs. Smith to her husband, she was greatly surprised to find there no less a person than Mr. Fitzhardy, the philanthropist, the man of letters, the disciple of culture. He was alone. Frances felt some awkwardness, recollecting the occasion on which they had last parted; but he was perfectly self-possessed, and began talking at once,

with easy friendliness. She explained her position at "The Grange," adding, in a tone of gentle deprecation: "They are so kind to me, it is impossible to live with them and see their goodness and not love and respect them."

"I am sure of it," he replied warmly. "Mr. Smith is renowned for his liberality, and is as unassuming as he is generous. He has only now left the room to make out a cheque for a thousand pounds, which he has promised me for the 'Society for Promoting Culture among the Lower Classes,' of which, you know, I am the secretary. We invited him to become our chairman, but he refuses on the ground that he does not pretend to any culture himself; he hopes the next generation will have better advantages in its youth. The money is to be devoted to the establishment of a scholarship, by means of which some promising lad in our night-school will have the advantage of three years' thorough technical training in any branch of artistic labour for which he shows himself best fitted."

"It is just like him. They are always giving and helping," said Frances. Mr. Smith's entrance put an end to the conversation.

It was Mr. Fitzhardy's pleasing duty to inform his sister of the step Frances had taken. Alicia could hardly believe her ears. "What!—Frances Lisle—a girl whom I believed to be patrician to her finger-tips—gone to be the companion of that vulgar, odious Mrs. Smith? It is incredible! How could one so apparently sensitive to the least want of refinement and cultivation, submit for a moment to become the dependant of people of that kind?"

"Perhaps you think she had better have let her mother and sisters starve on two hundred a-year?" was her brother's curt reply. Alicia was angry, and anger is rarely discreet.

"She need have done neither if she had only played her cards properly," she replied snappishly. "You may thank your stars she did not hook you safely before their smash-up came—you nibbled at the bait pretty considerably."

"Alicia!—you are downright vulgar," her brother exclaimed.

Later on, Mrs. Smith, thinking it would be a pleasant change for Frances, told her to invite some young friend to come and spend a few days with her at "The Grange." Greatly delighted at the prospect, Frances wrote to her dear Alicia, a long, loving, gossipy letter, such as girls love to send to their bosom friends, telling her something of her changed feeling towards these good people.

The reply came as a shock to all her previous notions:—

"Miss Fitzhardy regrets that she is obliged to inform Miss Lisle that their acquaintance must be considered at an end. She had given Miss Lisle credit for sufficient good taste to see that any intimacy between Miss Fitzhardy and the paid companion of her draper's wife was utterly out of the question. Miss Fitzhardy wishes Miss Lisle every happiness in her present station, and if at any time her name would be of service to Miss Lisle as a refer-

ence, or anything of that kind, she would be most happy to lend it."

A hot, indignant blush burned the girl's cheek as she read; her very fingers tingled for revenge! And then her better self came to her aid and she laughed aloud. "Poor Alicia!—if she had only heard her brother's proposal that day!" And so was born that fresh article of her new faith: "Intense vulgarity may be found beneath the most perfect veneer of polish and cultivation."

Mr. and Mrs. Smith quickly became very fond of Frances, and both did their utmost to spoil her; the mother, because she wanted to win the girl's love for her son's sake, and the father, because few men are unsusceptible to the charm of beauty added to gentleness and refinement. She brightened their home with her youth and sweetness, and soon let the influence of her artistic touch and good taste be felt upon their gorgeous surroundings.

Mrs. Smith spoke constantly of her charming new companion in her letters to her son, but carefully refrained from mentioning the young lady's name.

Frances was happy now; she tried to leave the future to the wisdom of Providence, and meanwhile strove with all her might to do and be all that she knew the man she loved would have wished to find her. She felt sure that a day would come when she would be able to ask his pardon for those unlucky words. How her face burned at the bare recollection of that scene! There could be no vulgarity more flagrant than she had exhibited in the pride of her own good breeding! Had he recognised this innate vulgarity in her as she had done in Alicia Fitzhardy; and if so, must not that love have been slain for ever? Here was the sharpest thorn in that soft nest in which she now found herself. Alas! she had learned too late the important lesson, that refinement and cultivation are only worthy of reverence when they are the outward tokens of innate qualities!

Mr. Smith, like his wife, was never happier than when talking about his boy, and Frances loved to draw him out on this subject whenever the occasion offered. He, knowing nothing of the reason which purposely kept his wife from bringing the young man's name up before Frances, quickly became very communicative. From him Frances learnt the history of Jack's childhood, the ailments of his babyhood, the hopes the old man had for his future, and even the name of that big sum he would place to his boy's credit when he made up his mind to marry and settle down, or when "Smith and Trewson" should be converted into a "Limited Liability Company." From Mr. Smith she also learned what the life of a successful business man must be: the energy, the enterprise, the unceasing toil, the unflagging patience that were necessary; and she could not but admire him for what he had achieved. It was "all for Jack," he said; he was a plain man himself, not likely to cut much of a figure anywhere but show him the young fellow in any society who was likely to beat

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his boy. Why, everybody loved him! Even when he was a baby, hadn't Mr. Wolvercourt, their clergyman, a gentleman of first-class family, offered to stand godfather to the boy? and had never ceased to love him and take notice of him. Twice every year Jack went to visit his god-father, who was a very old man now, too old to preach any longer, quietly wearing out his last years on a small estate in the West of England.

By-and-by there suddenly came the news of this Mr. Wolvercourt's death, and Jack was recalled to England to attend the funeral. Very soon the day arrived on which he was expected to return to "The Grange."

Frances, feeling uneasy and excited at the prospect of meeting him, had ran away, girl-like, and gone to pay her mother and sisters a visit at the tiny house in which they had established themselves at Highgate. One of the children opened the door to her. On the parlour table stood a bunch of glorious roses, rich pink, crimson and damask; and roses were roses too, at this late season of the year. Edith came flying in and flung herself into her sister's arms; but when she saw Frances glance at this fragrant bowl, she turned nearly as pink as the flowers themselves.

"Well, who is the sender?" her sister inquired.

"Mr. Josselyn, of course," Edith replied stoutly. Then, as Frances opened her eyes at the sight of her guilty cheeks—"Oh, they are quite as much for mamma as for me, I assure you," she maintained.

"You!—such a mere child as you!" Frances ejaculated.

"Well, I'm not such a child but that I shall soon grow to be a woman!" said Edith smartly. Then she suddenly threw herself down by her sister and clasped her arms around her waist, tears streaming from her shining eyes:

"Oh, Francie, dear, I'm not going to school any more, I'm going to work hard at home for two years, and learn all sorts of things—cooking and dusting and sewing and everything useful—for, Francie—Wranglers aren't always rich, you know—and oh, I'm so happy I don't know what to do with myself!"

Frances hugged her tight, but could not resist a little teasing. "Why, Edith! what about the tall, handsome, rich young man, with curly hair, who was to be the only lover you would look at——"

"Frances!" said her sister, reproachfully, "I was a silly little goose then, but I know better now. After all, what do appearances matter, if the heart is good and true—and—and all your own?"

"You wise little woman!" said Frances, kissing her fondly. "Thank God you have found that out in time."

She made her way back to "The Grange" in the dusk of the evening, and stole upstairs into her own room. She would not intrude upon the family party that night, they should have their boy all to themselves; and she was glad enough to postpone the meeting she could not help dreading.

Next morning Mrs. Smith sent for her to come to the boudoir.

"I missed you last night, Francie dear," she began, "but I suppose you came home late and were glad to go to bed." She had adopted the family pet name at the girl's own request. She found "Frances" too stiff. "I had a dear friend once called 'Fanny,' I should like to call you so, if you don't mind, my dear?" she said.

It happened that "Fanny" was a pet abomination with fastidious Frances; her colour rose, but a moment after she answered gently: "Certainly, if you wish it, Mrs. Smith, but—at home—they call me 'Francie,' and I think that is prettier." Of course it was adopted at once, as nearly all Francie's ideas were.

On this particular morning Mrs. Smith wanted Frances to write a note for her which a manservant was presently to take. The girl sat down to the writing-table, and Mrs. Smith went to give orders for the man to saddle his horse.

In a minute or two Jack Smith came sauntering unsuspectingly into the room; seeing the slight figure in its plain black dress bending over her work, he said to himself, "The new companion, I suppose." Her back was towards him, he could not see her face. She raised her head. Something in the turn of the neck, the rich coils of bright brown hair, seemed familiar; he made a hasty movement—she looked round; then she rose and faced him.

"Good heavens!—Miss Lisle!—you here?"

"Yes. Oh! don't you know?" her face was scarlet. "Hasn't your mother told you?—I'm her companion!"

"Never!" All his astonishment was summed up in the one word. She drew nearer.

"Yes. My father died, and we were very poor. Then Mrs. Smith took me—she has been so good, so kind. Oh! won't you forgive me? I was ignorant, stupid, what you will—I have repented bitterly—your mother is fond of me—your father thinks so much of me—I love them both, dearly—don't tell them, I can't bear it—spare me that; let them love me still—Ah!—I think you might forgive me—now—" She bravely tried to keep back the tears that blinded her and nearly choked her utterance. He came forward and took the hands she was holding out to him with such a supplicating gesture.

"I—almost think there's nothing—to forgive," he replied, slowly, as if half dreaming. Then Mrs. Smith came in and they moved quickly apart.

"Well, Johnny, my dear, I suppose you haven't forgotten Miss Lisle? This is the dear young lady whom I have told you about, who is kind enough to come and be a daughter to me. And a very good one she is too, Johnny; I don't know what I should do without her. We understand each other, don't we, Francie?"

The girl turned and kissed her, once—twice—too much moved to utter a word—then passed swiftly out of the room. He would have followed her, but his mother caught him by the arm. "One moment,

Johnny, dear. There was some hitch between you and your love ; tell me, was it us, father and me—because——"

"No, no, mother, dearest—there's nothing—God bless you!—there's nothing now——"

Frances had scarcely reached the foot of the stairs leading to her own apartment, before his voice arrested her. "Don't go, Miss Lisle—Frances—there is something I want to tell you." She paused, still half turned away from him. He went on quickly. "My godfather has left me a small estate in the West of England—on two conditions : the first is that I enter upon a Parliamentary career—and the second that I adopt his name, and henceforth call myself 'John Wolvercourt Smith'——" She covered her face with both hands.—"Under these circumstances—do you think I may venture to ask the girl I love—to be my wife?"

He tried to take the hands away from her hot, tear-stained face. "Oh!—I'm—sorry——" she faltered, yielding them to his grasp.

"Sorry, sweetheart!—for what?"

"Because—because——" Then she looked up bravely—there should be no misunderstanding now through any false shame of hers.—"Because now I can never prove to you how glad and—and proud it would make me—to be——"

"To be what?—my love—my darling?"

It was easy now, from the shelter of his arms, to whisper :

"*Mrs. John Smith, Junior.*"



FAIR NORMANDY.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND," "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," &c. &c.



OLD HOUSES, ROUEN.

LIKE most towns of mediæval interest Rouen has yielded to the influence of the march of time, and is no longer what she has been. Much of her glory has become that of tradition. Yet sufficient remains to make her still probably the most interesting town in Fair Normandy, as she is one of the most important. In the past she has played a great part, and is associated with some of the most romantic events in history. From the days of William the Conqueror Normandy belonged to England, until in 1205 Philip Augustus stepped in and quietly annexed it to France, thereby

depriving our monarchs of the titles of Dukes of Normandy. Historically, Rouen will ever be memorable as having been the scene of the imprisonment, trial and execution of Joan of Arc, the heroine of France par excellence; who has furnished themes without number for poets, novelists and historians, and who is worthy of all their eloquence. After nearly five centuries of time the name of the

Maid of Orleans still has power to thrill one with deep emotion, proving that what is great and good never dies.

We speak of Fair Normandy, but it is scarcely possible to say of her chief city Fair Rouen. Many of her best streets and quarters, from a modern point of view, would indeed be considered foul rather than fair, and we strongly suspect that the plague spot would reach further than the mere outward "dust of centuries." But from every aspect, and in spite of all conditions sanitary and other, we welcome these remnants of a bygone age. Dark vistas of quaint old houses, gabled and latticed; narrow streets, down the centre of which runs a stream of "limpid water" that rivals the far-famed water of Cologne only as serving to prove that extremes in point of odour have at last been found. But Cologne itself furnishes a sufficient example of this. Very often these old streets of Rouen are so narrow that neighbours may shake hands with each other from opposite windows, and if long-armed and long-limbed may spring lightly from casement to casement in the prosecution of free and unceremonious visits. Down some of these dark vistas one hesitates to penetrate. They are begrimed with the dust of ages. Refuse decorates their rough pavements, a fitting accompaniment to the limpid stream. The air is not incense laden. They might be dens haunted by thieves and robbers and all who live by preying upon mankind. You feel that by rashly penetrating into these precincts you are entering upon mysteries. They form an unknown land whence you may never return.

But it is not always so. Many of the quaintest streets are sufficiently wide to admit daylight, sunlight. In one of them a narrow river skirts some of the houses, washes their foundations. You have a view of a long series of arches, which compose the bridges or gangways leading to the front doors of the houses. The women congregate on the rails, laugh and talk and idle away the twilight hour. If a child falls through the rails into the water of the little river they take it very calmly. They are used to these little incidents that jeopardise life, and they have much faith in the proverb which says there is a special providence for children. They are generally hauled out again with a long pole and a net, and these curious little fish are just as lively after their immersion as before it.

In a narrow street close by, also old and gabled, a strange scene is going forward. It is a very poor street, and the people who crowd it are also poor. The shops one would very much hesitate to enter. A market is being held: the usual daily market of this poor thoroughfare. Everything is being sold; vegetables and fish, meat and fruit, tinware and hardware. The scene is very animated. The noise is deafening. What voices these lower orders have, all over the world! There is a long row of provisions all down the street. You hesitate to circulate amongst the people, for they are repulsive in dress and appearance. Every-

thing is in keeping. The houses are old and dirty and very quaint; so are the buyers and sellers. Many of them look like ancient Jews, and probably are so. The whole scene in its constant movement, animation, shouting and gesticulation is bewildering, but full of interest. It is good to watch it from a little distance; from outside the charmed circle as it were. An old Jew that might be Fagin, and an old crone that might have been Charlotte in her younger days, are bargaining over a stale fish. On both sides nose and chin meet, and the hands pointing to the object of dispute are bony and long and claw-like, like those of a miser. At length matters are adjusted, and Fagin departs with his coveted prize.

It is all quite as entertaining as a play or a pantomime; and it is full of human interest, though the humanity is of the lowest order. Even the artistic element is not wanting. Every house bears its charmed impression; what the French would call its *cachet*; both in face and outline. These have not been altered or destroyed. The ruthless march of progress has not yet come so far. But it will do so one day, and sweep away all this wealth and treasure without a moment's pause, without regret. Modern civilization has no love for the antique or the artistic. Everything must give place to the thirst for gold.

The people are not quaint in the way of costume. Very little of this is seen in any part of Rouen. It is unfortunately dying out very much all through Normandy. And as the costumes of a country always form one of its most interesting and distinguishing features: so that we can never separate the impression they make upon us from our recollection of its hills and valleys and streams, its highways and byways: this is infinitely to be regretted. It is wonderful how much costume adds to the attractiveness of a people. A face that will look pretty, almost beautiful, under a quaint Normandy head-dress, appears quite commonplace, loses all its charm, when exposed to the trying ordeal of the wonderful and fearful constructions of the latter day milliners. Let anyone come straight back to England from one of the remote Normandy or Brittany villages, where costume may still be found—such as Ploermel, for instance—and how tame and commonplace and unpoetical and unromantic (we might multiply adjectives) will the English seem in comparison. The effect is in no slight degree depressing. But the inheritors of ancient costume are not aware of their privileges; or they are indifferent to them; or else the love of change is stronger in the human heart even than vanity itself. And so here again the admirable traces of the middle ages are fast dying out.

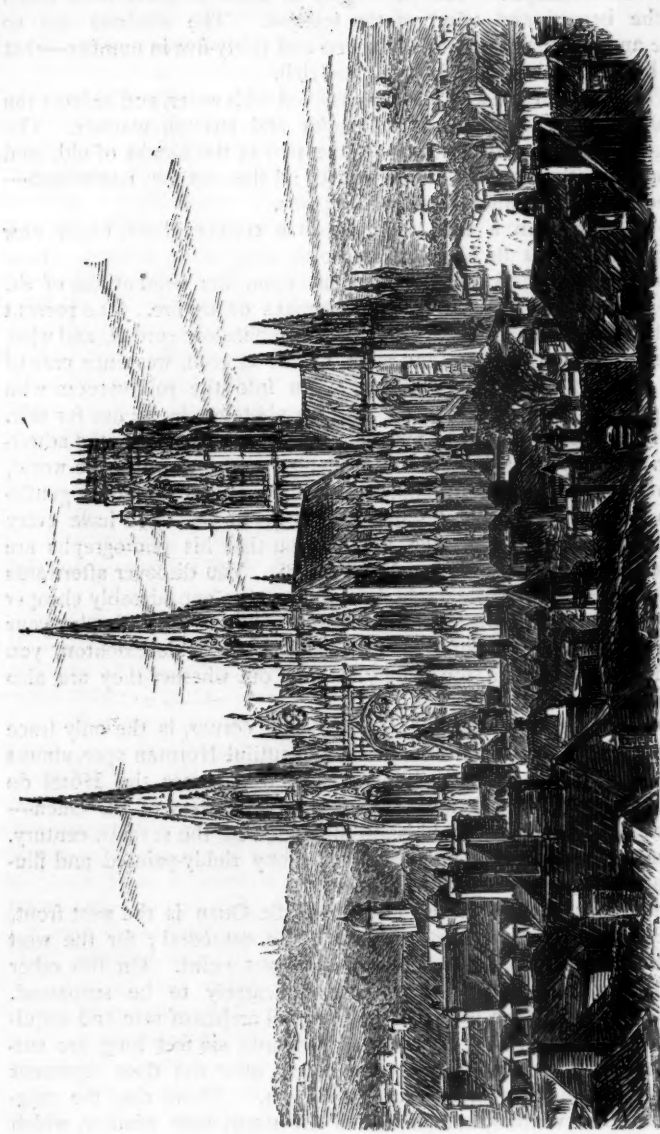
I lately spoke of Rouen Cathedral, its beauties internal and external; but there is a second church that contests the palm of superiority with her: the Church of St. Ouen. I shall not easily forget it as we first saw it. Walking up the modern, and, therefore

uninteresting, Rue de la République, turning into the small side street of the Rue Damiette, and so on to the Place Eau de Robec—which, by the way, is close to the street of that name, where runs the small river with the quaint gangways giving access to the houses—we suddenly saw rising before us, high in the air, an exquisite, airy, fairy-like tower. It looked at the first moment more a vision or a dream than a reality; more a beautiful piece of fretwork suspended from the skies, than a building of earth. It was a perfect Gothic tower, nearly three hundred feet high, ending in an octagonal open-work lantern which has been called the Crown of Normandy; and seems worthy of its name.

As we drew near, the whole building stood disclosed, a perfect Gothic edifice, and one of the most striking in existence. It has the advantage of being better placed than the cathedral, so that a far better general view may be obtained of it. On the other hand, the lovely gabled houses and old-world surroundings that add so much to the charm and romantic effect of the cathedral are here wanting. Near the cathedral for instance, you gaze down a narrow street, rich in quaint gables and outlines, dormer windows, and latticed panes; and the extremity of the street is closed in by an exquisite south doorway, rich in sculptured and crumbling decoration, above which the towers rise majestically on either side. It is a matchless effect and view. The pure and clear blue sky above is scarcely needed to make it almost celestial.

Nothing of this sort is found in the neighbourhood of St. Ouen; but the building itself is quite independent of all accessories. The whole exterior is distinguished by lightness and grace; an effect much increased by the open arches and tracery of the octagon, and the small flying buttresses that reach to the turrets in the angles. The crown terminating the octagon consists of fleurs-de-lys: a symbol also carried out in the tracery of the windows and in the painted glass.

The interior is as beautiful, as light and graceful as the exterior. It is of immense size: four hundred and forty-three feet long, eighty-three feet wide, and one hundred and four feet high. The view looking downwards from the west doorway is almost sublime in its uninterrupted perfection, and no superfluous ecclesiastical ornamentation in the shape of screens or gates or divisions disturbs the view. It is full of calmness and repose. The choir has double aisles, and the nave has no side chapels. The front pillars run up to the roof; the side pillars bend under the arches. The clerestory is unusually large and lofty, adding to the effect of lightness, which again is increased by the number and size of the windows. Standing in certain positions, the solid portions of the walls are lost, and the cathedral appears to be composed of nothing but window and tracery. The four central pillars supporting the tower are of extreme beauty. Most of the windows are filled-in with coloured glass, including the beautiful rose windows in the north, south



ST. OULEN.

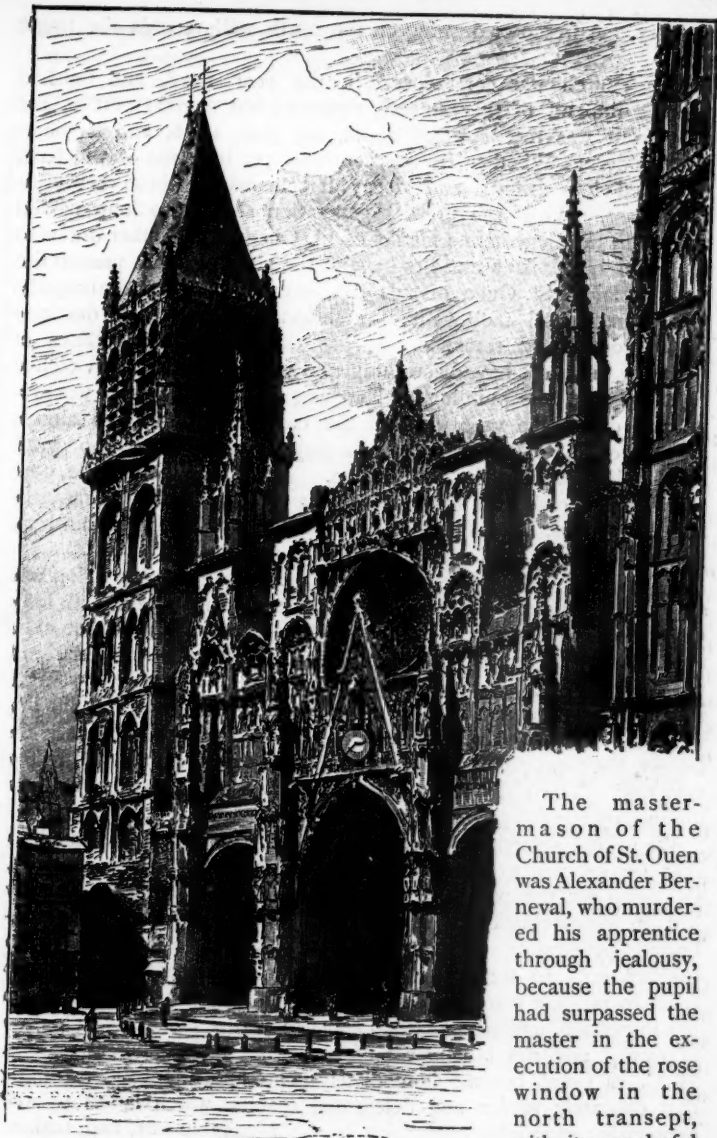
and west transepts. The prevalence of coloured glass adds much to the beauty and effect of the interior. The windows are so large and so numerous—one hundred and thirty-five in number—that the light, though subdued, is full and rich.

The font near the west doorway is filled with water, and reflects the whole of the building in a singular and striking manner. The verger called it a "discovery" on the part of the monks of old, and considered it a sufficient atonement for all the sins they committed—if monks can be guilty of committing sins.

For, once upon a time there stood a convent here, where now stands the Hôtel de Ville, on the north side of the church. Four churches in succession have been built upon the present site of St. Ouen, destroyed in turn by the Normans or by fire. The present public garden was originally part of the monastery garden, and what is now the sacristy, or robing-room of the church, was once part of the cloisters. The verger will take you into the robing-room with the greatest pleasure, and show you the photographs he has for sale. He is a highly respectable man, perfectly dressed, and speaks admirably. You wonder if he is a gentleman come down in the world, or whether, on the other hand, he was born one of "nature's gentlemen." However it may be, he dignifies his office. You have every confidence in him, and when he tells you that his photographs are better than anyone else's you believe him. You discover afterwards that many of the photographs in the town are considerably cheaper than those you bought from the sacristan; but afraid of having your impression disturbed of this ecclesiastical admirable Crichton, you do not examine them too closely to find out whether they are also inferior.

Outside the cathedral, in the north-east corner, is the only trace left of one of the former churches: a beautiful Norman apse, almost the gem of the whole building. Beyond it comes the Hôtel de Ville, which was the former Benedictine Monastery of St. Ouen—the Saint having been Archbishop of Rouen in the seventh century. It contains a large public library and many richly-painted and illuminated manuscripts of great interest.

The weak portion of the Church of St. Ouen is the west front. In this it contrasts unfavourably with the cathedral; for the west front of the cathedral is perhaps its strongest point. On the other hand, the south portal of St. Ouen is scarcely to be surpassed. It is surrounded by a fringe of open trefoil arches of rare and exquisite workmanship; and two grained pendants, six feet long, are suspended from its deep vault. The reliefs over the door represent Death and the Assumption of the Virgin. Above rises the magnificent rose window, companion to the north rose window, which has so sad and romantic an interest; and yet above that is an arcade decorated with eleven statues. The whole is crowned by a statue of St. Ouen.



CATHEDRAL.

The master-mason of the Church of St. Ouen was Alexander Berneval, who murdered his apprentice through jealousy, because the pupil had surpassed the master in the execution of the rose window in the north transept, with its wonderful tracery. The builder suffered for his

sin ; but the monks, out of gratitude, buried his body within the church, which henceforth became a glorious monument to his

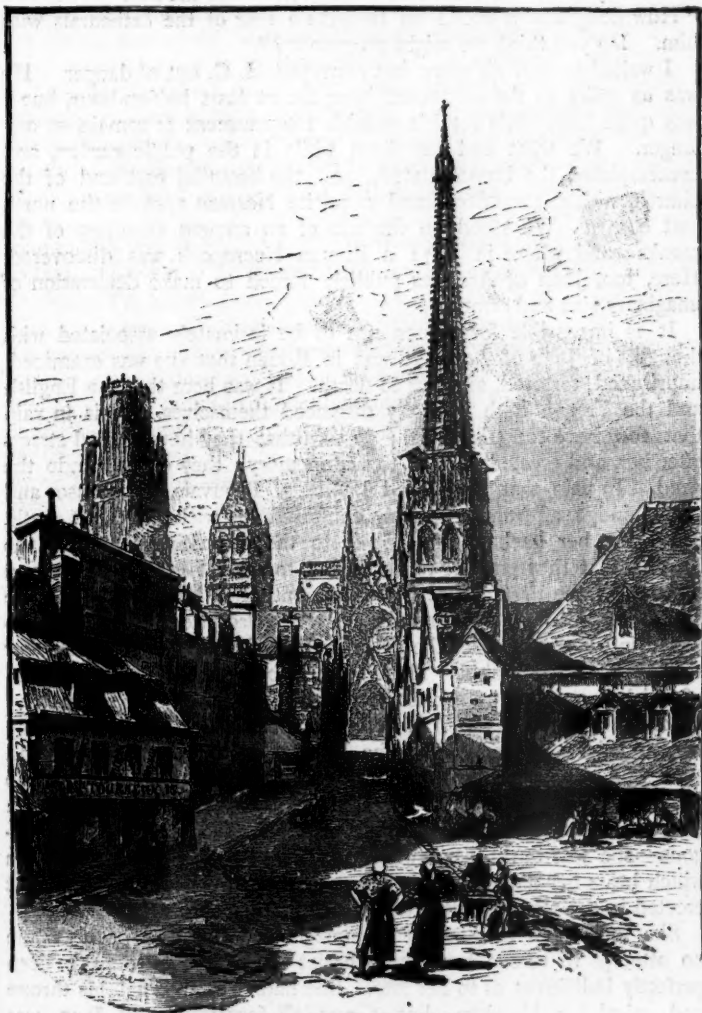
memory. A fresco or drawing on the north wall records the tragic event.

The church was commenced in the year 1318, and finished towards the end of the fifteenth century; but a great part of the west front was reconstructed about the year 1846, and is therefore modern. Whether in the centuries yet to come it will have crumbled into beauty and decay it remains for those centuries to disclose. We of the present generation shall have long passed away with the Benedictine monks of St. Ouen and all other orders to the Land of Shadows that lies beyond the veil. For the present the west portal of St. Ouen offends the lover of beauty and antiquity. One cannot find fault with it architecturally, but it is destitute of all poetry and romance. It has the clear, hard outlines of newness. It might have been completed yesterday. It does violence to the rest of the building, and coming straight from the wonderful and dream-like west front of the cathedral, it becomes almost aggressive. Such, at least, was its impression upon us, who gazed and could not help the comparison. H.C., who before the west front of the cathedral had gone into a profound series of raptures and contortions, here, figuratively, felt his spirit fainting within him, gnashed his teeth, and went into weeping and wailing.

But passing beyond the portals into the interior, what a vision was at once disclosed. What a grand expanse, what broad and lofty proportions, what beauty and light and elegance. You were at once raised to another world, a higher influence. The whole interior stood unfolded at a glance, in all the perfection of the Gothic school, marvellously pure and refined, full of charm and grace. The eye wandered upwards in a series of arches upon arches, tracery on tracery, the front pillars of the richly moulded piers running up to the very roof. The rich glass of the windows threw its gorgeous light around, dyeing the pavement with its many colours.

We gained something in effect when we first saw it, inasmuch as that service was not going on, and the vast interior was empty, excepting for the presence of two quiet English ladies, apparently lost in contemplation of the scene. They sat where the sunbeams, penetrating through the windows, fell athwart them in brilliant rays, so that they looked like silent images brought into relief by rainbow colours. But they presently rose and joined us in our inspection, and we soon found that they were decidedly "children of earth," and not inhabitants of purer and more ethereal regions. H. C., as usual, became immediately polite and attentive; assuming that delicately tender and deferential manner which ladies so well appreciate; explaining everything in his admirable way, and making clear and simple what to these ladies were mysteries of Architecture and motives of Period. They were very much taken with him; it was pronounced and unmistakable; and when they separated, presented him with their card and begged for his further acquaint-

ance. A gratified flush mounted to his brow, poor simple moth that he was. It is certain that if he goes on cultivating and indulging his



PLACE DES TOURS, ROUEN.

present flirting propensities, he will one day land himself in serious trouble, the defendant, probably, in some heavy Breach of Promise case: or, perhaps, an action for Bigamy.

"What a charming young man," I overheard one lady whisper to

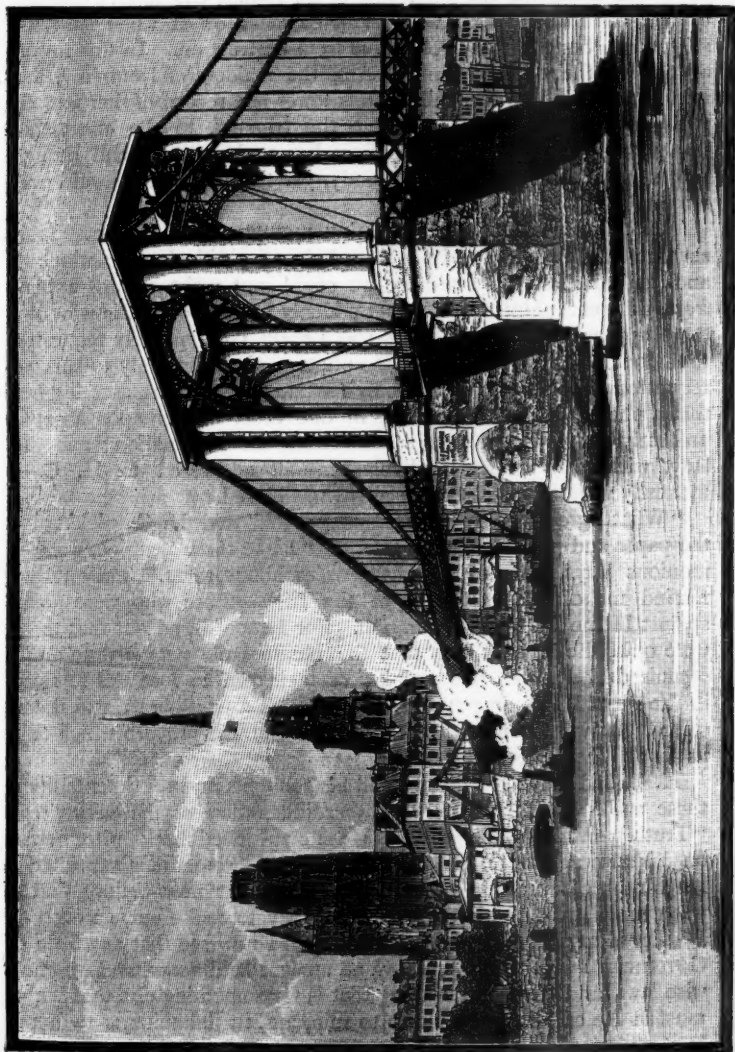
the other as they passed again within the tinted sunbeams. I was just the other side the pulpit and they did not see me. "And what a heavenly smile and cultivated mind," responded the other to the one. "How delightful it would be to make a tour of the cathedrals with him. Do you think we might propose it?"

I waited to hear no more, but conveyed H. C. out of danger. He was as sulky as the oft-quoted bear, for at least half-an-hour, but it was quite impossible for his amiable temperament to remain so any longer. We went and sat for a while in the public garden, and contemplated the bronze statues, and the beautiful east end of the church, with the wonderful and exquisite Norman apse in the north east corner. We stood on the site of an ancient cemetery of the monks; and where in 1871 a Roman Necropolis was discovered. Here, too, Joan of Arc was publicly forced to make declaration of imaginary sins and errors.

It is impossible for Rouen not to be intimately associated with thoughts of Joan of Arc. It was in Rouen that she was examined, imprisoned, tortured, and put to death. It was here that the English and the French both eternally disgraced themselves. It is in vain that they have canonised her; in vain that they have named streets after her, and erected statues to her memory; they cannot undo the deed. In vain that the wicked Bishop of Beauvais, her accuser and unjust judge, afterwards publicly confessed his wickedness; it could not bring her back to life. It is to the everlasting shame of the English that they put her to death, but to the yet greater shame and disgrace of the French that her own countrymen betrayed her. The Bishop of Beauvais was French, and the false priest, who was introduced into her cell under the guise of friendship, in order to learn her secrets, was French also. There seem to be no depths of wickedness of which human nature cannot at times be guilty; and as in the days of old men were possessed of devils, so possessed they must still be occasionally. The simplicity, the bravery, the purity, the high and successful mission of the Maid of Orleans, only seemed to harden the heart of her accusers. After a public trial—if that could be called a trial which tended all one way, and of which the conclusion was foregone—she was burnt as a witch in the year 1431, in the square which bears her name, and on the spot now marked by a monument erected in the worst possible taste.

She was taken prisoner at Compiègne, but her own people made no attempt to rescue her, and Charles VII. seems to have been perfectly indifferent as to her fate. She had re-established his throne and saved his kingdom, but it was all forgotten, and Joan was abandoned to her fate. Four centuries have rolled away, but the memory and fame of Joan of Arc are as vivid as ever, whilst ten times four centuries will not blot out the shame of her enemies. After she was burnt, her ashes were collected by the public executioner and thrown into the Seine by order of the Cardinal of Winchester,

one of the most vindictive of her pursuers. He and others witnessed her execution, and even gloried in her sufferings, interrupting the



SUSPENSION BRIDGE OVER THE SEINE.

confessor who was supporting her by his presence, and bidding him conclude his office.

She was imprisoned in the *Château fort*, a castle built by Philip

Augustus in 1205, and destroyed by Henry IV. This castle was flanked by seven strong towers, of which only one remains. This one tower had fallen into the possession of les Dames Ursulines, a convent of nuns in Rouen; who were about to demolish it when the town stepped in, bought it and rescued it from destruction. In this tower, or one of the others, Joan of Arc, the maiden of Domrémy, was imprisoned; and on the walls of this tower is a record of her famous reply to her accusers when before the tribunal, to the effect that though they drew untrue words from her, under torture, and though they severed her soul from her body, yet truth and fact would ever remain.

This tower is one of the remaining monuments of Rouen. It is surrounded by ancient and picturesque houses, with dormer windows and gabled roofs, an assembly we could not resist photographing from different points of view. Suddenly from one of the windows there appeared a woman's head, and a shrill voice politely requested the honour of receiving one of the photographs. In reply to this we requested the honour of the lady's name and address, assuring her that a photograph should follow in due time. Whereupon a paper presently came fluttering to earth bearing the information; and the lady, with many smiles and blushes—all addressed to H. C.—modestly withdrew, and the casement was closed.

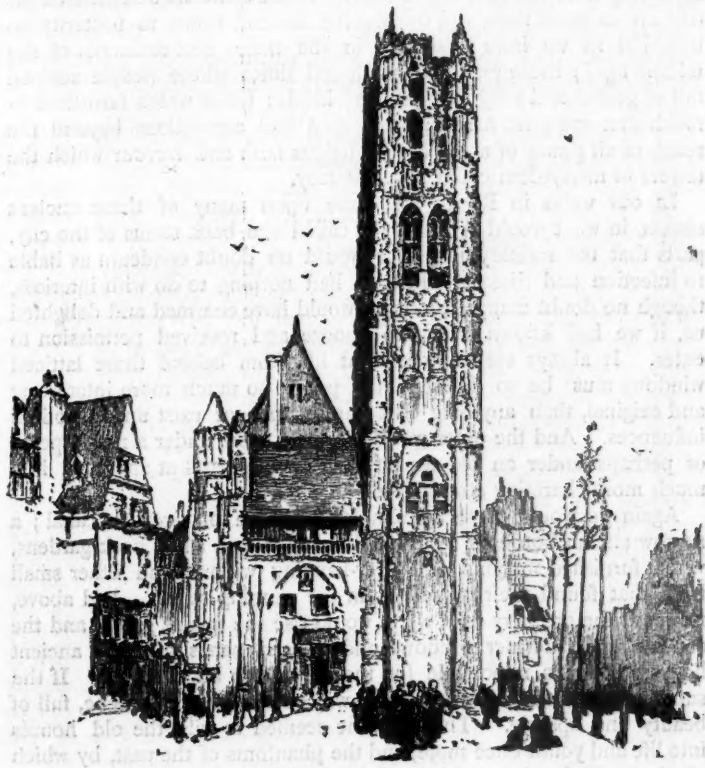
"What agreeable, unsophisticated people," said H. C., picking up the paper and putting it away safely. "I like these genuine, unceremonious ways, with no *arrières pensées* about them. They rather remind me of the best type of the Irish—those who were dead against Home Rule and Separation. For I soon found out that these were quite the best set, and that the Home Rule people were a disorganised body, who had nothing of their own to lose and rejoiced in the very idea of anarchy and confusion as a possible gain to themselves. It was, in fact, a sort of reversal of the proverb which tells us that 'When thieves fall out honest men get their own.'"

H. C. had indeed changed in all his thoughts and sentiments upon these subjects. It was only another illustration of the saying that "Truth prevails in the end." He now looked back with horror on his radical days. "I cannot," he would sometimes say after a long and profound train of thought: "I cannot now believe that I was ever as great a radical as you would try to make out, or even as I believed myself. But be that as it may, I now see that any form of Government which would remove all ancient landmarks, and upset all wise laws, and change everything that is for something else that is not, must in the end bring a country to ruin, and its inhabitants to hopeless confusion."

This was very delightful, and I suggested that H. C. should give up all his artistic proclivities, all his indulgence in the *dolce-far-niente* state of existence that is at once his pleasure and somewhat of his snare, and turn his thoughts to politics and a seat in Parliament. He

would certainly become far less interesting, yet a more useful member of society. Whether it will ever come to pass remains to be proved. At present he elects for a somewhat lazy life, and his indulgence in the love of the beautiful.

There was certainly a great deal in Rouen to appeal to one's artistic feeling, and to one's love of the beautiful and the antique. Our days



TOUR ST. LAURENT.

passed in a dream. We haunted the old quarters, the ancient and dilapidated streets. The gabled houses in spite of the dust of centuries, and the dirt and dust of the hour, delighted us. The dormer windows and the latticed panes were ever lovely in their old age and decay. We plunged boldly into mysterious regions, dark and dim with a light that was certainly not religious. Sometimes the stray inhabitants would gaze at us as if we were strange and unknown birds of passage; at other times we were received with that indifferent contempt which is said to be the worst of all treatment.

We were abundantly rewarded. Days and weeks would not exhaust the hidden beauties of Rouen, for you may visit and revisit these old haunts, and each time find some new feature to charm the eye, and reward the most indefatigable patience and research. True it is always of the same kind; the beauties of architecture and antiquity; but it is a kind that is only too rare; only too quickly disappearing from the face of the earth. In the centuries and generations that are to come there will be nothing handed down to posterity so beautiful as we have possessed in the traces and remnants of the middle ages; those grand old mediæval times whose people seemed full of genius and lofty thoughts and ideals: times which furnished so much that was great in art; when men had convictions beyond the reach of all power of argument; religious faith and fervour which the terrors of martyrdom could never destroy.

In our walks in Rouen we came upon many of these ancient streets, in what would probably be called the back slums of the city, parts that the sanitary inspector would no doubt condemn as liable to infection and disease. But we had nothing to do with interiors, though no doubt many an interior would have charmed and delighted us, if we had known where to choose and received permission to enter. It always seems to us that life from behind those latticed windows must be so different, the people so much more interesting and original, than anything that can happen or exist under modern influences. And the outer world must be seen under a new aspect; or perhaps under an old aspect; but at least and at any rate, in a much more charming atmosphere.

Again we would come upon a long stretch of river or canal; a narrow stream bordered by crumbling walls and small back gardens, which furnished weeping and over-hanging willows, and other small trees that found their reflections in the running water. And above, from out the greenery as it were, would rise the quaint gables and the red roofs, the dormer windows and latticed panes of these ancient houses. It was impossible for the eye not to be charmed. If the sun shone and the sky was blue, it was quite a laughing scene, full of beauty and sparkle. The sunshine seemed to gild the old houses into life and youth once more, and the phantoms of the past, by which all these old houses are haunted, seemed to vanish and disappear as mists before the dawn.

There was one such spot in particular in Rouen to which we returned many times, though it was far from our hotel, for the sake of the vivid delight and impression its contemplation invariably gave us. It was all I have described. In sunshine it was full of sparkle and beauty, and in gloom it was full of depth and grandeur, and a certain artistic colouring that invariably sent H. C. into the poetical mood I had once fondly hoped was buried with the Majorcan days. But I suppose we cannot really discard our nature. Our moods may slumber, but they do not die. They may remain in abeyance for a



DOOR OF ST. MACLOU, BY JEAN GOUJON.

time, but they are there, ready to spring into activity the moment they are aroused. It is so with ourselves; with our inner nature, our virtues and our faults. We conquer and subdue the latter, but they are never completely eradicated. We bind chains about our souls, and if the chains themselves disappear, they leave an impression that is much more lasting.

But there was a great deal in Rouen—to resume our legitimate theme—that was wonderfully interesting, without going to the outskirts of the town, or into its ancient quarters.

Right in the very centre of the new part of the town, for instance, and almost under the shadow of the cathedral on one side, and St. Ouen on the other, is the Church of St. Maclou, a very rich example of the florid gothic style of the fifteenth century. The west front, with its deep tripartite porch, is very magnificent and elaborate, and its doors, exquisite examples of Jean Goujon, are almost unrivalled. The interior is not very striking, but it has some beautiful stained glass windows, and a remarkable and very lovely gothic staircase leading to the organ loft.

Not very far off is another building equally interesting, but not ecclesiastical; one of the most noted in France. This is the Palais de Justice, erected in the days of Louis XII. It is a magnificent building in the florid gothic style, and is loaded with ornamentation. It forms three sides of a square. The wing on the left is called the *Salle des pas perdus*, from its great size. It was built in 1493 as an exchange. The roof resembles a ship's hull, inverted, and is of a dark rich colour that is very effective. The central portion was built about the year 1500 for the Supreme Tribunal or Parliament of Normandy. The building is now chiefly used as an Assize court. The exterior is extremely effective, and of the most refined character. It resembles very much some of the town halls of Belgium, but is of still greater beauty and refinement than any of these.

Another building of the same character, smaller but equally interesting, is the Hôtel de Bourghéroulde, constructed at the close of the fifteenth century by the Seigneur de Bourghéroulde for a palace. It is situated in the Place de la Pucelle, and the great gates admitting you are behind the statue of Joan of Arc. There is a porter, whose offices are scarcely wanted, for there is little to be seen beyond the exterior of the building. It is built round a court, and the enclosure is one of the most beautiful and perfect things in Rouen. You pass through the gates, and are immediately in another world and another age. A beautiful hexagonal tower rises in the centre, richly sculptured; on your right is a short but exquisite staircase, leading to rooms that to-day are given up to financial matters. On the left the walls are richly decorated with reliefs, representing scenes from the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." The upper windows are pinnaced. The whole is in that condition of crumbling decay which adds so much to its beauty.

Near the Tour St. André is the ancient house of Diana of Poitiers. The front is nothing but sculptured wood of amazing richness. Not far off this is the clock-tower, one of the most curious monuments of Rouen. It was built in the year 1389, and contains two bells cast in the thirteenth century. One of them, named the Silver Bell, still rings the curfew every night at nine o'clock. The gateway, which unites the tower to the former Hôtel de Ville, was constructed



ROUEN.

in the year 1511. It is of great beauty and interest; and looking down the street beyond it affords one of the most quaint and charming pictures to be found in this ancient city. In the basement of the tower is a fountain, bearing figures of Alphæus and Arethusa, whilst the walls of the gateway are decorated with reliefs representing scenes from the life of the Good Shepherd.

But it would be difficult to enumerate all the points of interest belonging to Rouen. There are many Gothic fountains spread about the city, of great beauty of design. The quays themselves are broad and full of interest, and the port is always crowded with shipping: with vessels of three hundred tons and downwards. The excursions

in the neighbourhood are full of charm. The views from the heights are wonderful. Rouen lies sleeping in a hollow, her tall factory chimneys rising like a small forest about her. A blue atmosphere hangs over her. The broad Seine winds her silvery course, and may be traced far away, hurrying to the sea. There is life and movement on her surface, for craft of all sorts and sizes are passing to and fro. You may take the steamer to Havre every day, or to Elbeuf, and you will be charmed with the journey. The banks of the Seine offer a rich variety of scenery. It is, indeed a laughing and smiling landscape: more charming and English in its aspect than will be found in any other part of France. Throughout Normandy will be found the beautiful flower-gemmed hedgerows which are so peculiar to England, and give to English scenery its rich distinctive character.

It was with the greatest reluctance that we prepared to leave the old town, with all its ancient and historical associations. Here one lived another life, breathed another atmosphere. It was sufficient charm to wander to the cathedral, and feast one's eyes upon all that beauty of architecture, time-worn and refined to the delicacy of lace work. It was a delight to pass through the portals of St. Ouen, and gaze upon all that free expanse of perfect Gothic architecture. One felt raised and elevated above the ordinary world. It had the effect upon one of some sweet-toned instrument; of grand harmonies poured forth in an uninterrupted stream. The spirit felt soothed and refreshed; one's physical condition gained by the experience; the nerves that perhaps were recently all ajar were immediately calmed as if lulled by a narcotic. The mind fell into repose. Visions and dreams of a higher life and a better world took possession of the fancy. The mantle of care and sorrow—that unseen but very real garment that we most of us have to wear, though it may be invisible to mortal eyes other than our own—falls from the shoulders on these occasions, and we rise free and unshackled above our ordinary selves.

We felt equally out of the world when wandering about the ancient streets that still remain to tell of what has been. Half a century ago, Rouen was quite a mediæval city: a city of gables, of dormer windows and latticed panes and red roofs. Her pinnacles rose upwards in countless numbers. Her churches seemed fitting guardians of so much antiquity. The silver curfew rang out nightly over one of the fairest and quaintest scenes of earth. Her people went to and fro in their curious costumes, fulfilling their simple annals. The power of steam had not as yet been heard or seen, hurrying men to and fro upon the earth. Paris was still far off, and the outer world was a dream. The river flowed onwards to the sea, and people occupied themselves little with its rise and fall. Lives were primitive, even half a century ago. It is since then that the world has awakened and things have changed. It cannot all be for the better, even in an age of progress. For progress also means transition; and in every state of transition someone must suffer.

And Rouen has suffered. Her people can scarcely be as noble and disinterested as they were in quieter and more sleepy days. But they are a fine race, and probably will hold their own in comparison with other people. And if Rouen itself has suffered, and lost most of her mediæval aspect, perhaps it makes us prize and appreciate the more what remains. We look down a vista of gables and red roofs, and dormer windows and latticed panes; we note all the beauty of outline and colouring; we see how charmingly the blue sky overhead blends with the wonderful old-world view below: we close our eyes and thoughts to the rest of the world; and we are thankful. And in her darkest and lowest quarters, where daylight scarcely penetrates, and where cleanliness is scarcely known, after all we feel inclined to exclaim with all our energy of heart and soul, FAIR ROUEN! Long may she flourish!



ON FINDING AN OLD LETTER.

OH, little scented billet doux,
What strange emotions have you brought,
What tender trains of pensive thought—
'Tis ten years since you met my view!

I seized it with a trembling hand,
And tore the silken bonds apart;
I pressed it to my lips—my heart—
With feelings few could understand.

From out its folds there fell some flowers,
They fell in fragments at my touch—
In ruin sweet! they said so much;
They spoke to me of bygone hours.

And where is she from whom they came?
Moves she on earth, or dwells above?
I loved her with a spirit's love,
It was no simple boyish flame.

Not here—not here—but far away;
From one of those bright stars we see
She now looks down and beckons me,
Beyond the clouds, beyond the day.

I kissed the lines—'twas with a sigh—
Then, mute into the dim dead past,
A long, long mournful look I cast,
With aching heart and spellbound eye.

ISABEL CLIFFORD, M.D.

I.

IN one of the loveliest valleys of the Bernese Oberland—the lovely valley of Rosenwald—is a nook where nestles a small hotel or large pension, much frequented by artists of every nationality. It was looking its loveliest one night when an August moon filled it with a light far more beautiful than the day. So thought one of the visitors who sat, wrapped in her dressing-gown, studying the weird effects of deep shadow on the still, pine-clad slopes before her window. She had sat there for nearly an hour, drinking in with quiet delight the beauty of the scene, when a hurried knock at her door startled her.

"Is it you, Auntie? Is anything the matter?" she said, in a low tone, as she slipped back the bolt and opened the door.

"Isabel, that baby in the room next mine has got croup. I'm sure of it. *Won't* you go and see it?" The old lady's tone was one of pleading, and she looked doubtfully at her niece as she spoke.

"Won't you go, Auntie? I'd so much rather not ——"

"Oh, I'm too nervous. Of course they have no doctor, and I don't believe that poor young mother knows what to do."

"Do you think so? Perhaps ——"

"Don't delay, dear. They will be glad enough to have your advice when they know."

Miss Clifford obeyed without further hesitation. She went to the room whence issued the distressing sounds which every mother knows and dreads. Her knock was not heard; so she entered and went to the bedside before the child's mother was aware of her presence.

"Will you let me look at your child?" said Isabel, gently. "I am a doctor."

"I don't know what ails her; she is very ill," was all the mother answered; but she stood aside and held the candle so that Isabel might see the little patient.

"You must ring for some boiling water," commanded the doctor, after a quick glance round the room. Mrs. Lawrence obeyed with an encouraging sense of trust in the stranger, who had so unexpectedly appeared in her utmost need. She knew very little about children, for this was her first; and she had never in her life before felt so helpless as when she knelt by her darling's side, afraid to leave her even to ask advice and aid. In a very few minutes, Miss Clifford dipped a sponge into hot water, and, opening the little nightgown, she laid it on the child's throat. Some moments went by in silence; presently the harsh, ringing sound grew less distressing, and the pulse in the tiny wrist became slower. The two women did not speak

another word, as again and again the scalding sponge was placed on the delicate skin. At last the doctor stood back from the bed. Mrs. Lawrence looked mutely the question she dare not put into words, and received the reply she had hardly hoped for.

"Yes, she will do now. Keep her warm and watch closely while I go and prepare some medicine. I think I have with me what I want."

Left alone, and almost overwhelmed by her relief, Mrs. Lawrence gave herself the indulgence of a few tears; but she bravely dashed them away and sat down to watch her child, who was quietly sleeping. She remembered, and now with a feeling of surprise, that the girl who had come to her in her despair, and had done so much for her, had sat beside her for nearly a week at the table d'hôte, yet she had never discovered the profession of her neighbour. Miss Clifford generally spoke only to her aunt, or to an old French artist who sat opposite, and with whom she seemed to have quickly become friends. Mrs. Lawrence thought again of the slight figure in its trailing white robe, of the small head with its coils of golden-brown hair, and of the delicate white hands that had ministered so deftly to her Nellie. Yet, unlike as Miss Clifford seemed to her preconceived notion of a woman-doctor, Mrs. Lawrence never felt a moment's distrust of her skill. There was too much unconscious dignity and composure about her for that.

"She is sleeping," whispered Mrs. Lawrence, as the doctor again entered the room, bearing a small bottle and a glass.

"You must give her this now. Afterwards she may sleep as long as she likes." And as the child swallowed the medicine and sank to sleep again, Isabel added: "My room is next but one on the left; you must call me if she does not continue to sleep quietly. But I think she will be all right after a few hours."

It was now one o'clock, and Isabel returned to her room and lay down. The moonlight was fading away as she fell asleep. By five she had risen and dressed, and, as some noisy tourists left the hotel, she knocked once again at Mrs. Lawrence's door. Nellie lay fast asleep, holding her mother's hand. Mrs. Lawrence looked up with a smile.

"She has not waked once. How can I thank you?"

"Lie down on the bed and go to sleep. I will stay with you."

"Please do stay, though I can't sleep. My husband will be here in a few days, and he will thank you properly. We ——"

Miss Clifford interrupted her. "I have a very strong objection to telling people that I am a doctor when I am abroad, unless it is necessary. You will do me a great kindness if you will forget it, or at least not tell anyone here."

"May I not tell even my husband? I want him to know what you have done for Nellie. But no one else shall know, if that is your wish."

"It *is* my wish," said Isabel decidedly. Then, as if amused at her own earnestness, she added :

"I am not ashamed of my profession, but people stare and make my holiday disagreeable if they know. I suffered from public curiosity last year, and I want to escape it now."

"I shall keep your secret, then," said Mrs. Lawrence, smiling up at Isabel with a very grateful look.

Nellie's French nurse soon appeared, and many were the gestures, sighs and exclamations with which she heard of her little charge's sudden illness. Isabel withdrew, having ascertained that Marie was well used to such cases and knew all that was needed.

II.

DURING the next few days Isabel saw a good deal of Mrs. Lawrence, and the two women quickly got to know and like each other, though it seemed probable that their paths in life would tend in widely different directions. They were sitting one afternoon in a nest of pine-roots just above the hotel, when Mrs. Lawrence said :

"My husband will be here to-night. I am so glad he will meet you and that you will know him. And it is so fortunate that my brother-in-law is coming too."

"Why is that fortunate?" asked Isabel, lazily trying to catch a butterfly that was settling on a flower close by.

"It will do him good to see you. He is almost perfect in everybody's eyes, but in mine his one fault is unpardonable."

Isabel did not seem curious on the subject of Mrs. Lawrence's brother-in-law, so that lady went on gratuitously :

"He cannot bear to hear of women doing anything but what he calls domestic duties. He thinks I am a model of all the virtues, because I make Nellie's frocks and darn Tom's stockings myself. He would despise me if he thought I could do anything else."

"Then it is fortunate for you he does not know," said Isabel gravely.

"Oh, we are great friends," continued Mrs. Lawrence. "He is very clever and very learned. He has a fellowship at Oxford, and just now he is writing a book. He has never known any women, and that is why his notions are so absurd : I should like you to teach him right views."

"I never work in holiday time—when I can help it," she added laughing, as Mrs. Lawrence looked up quickly with an affectionate gesture :

"How lovely that waterfall looks now the sun is on it. Let us not talk for a little while."

Mrs. Lawrence was becoming used to the moods of her new friend. She sat quite still, only glancing now and then at the pale, quiet face with its intent look. Miss Clifford wore a simple dress of

some thin woollen stuff: it was neat and well-fitting, but "not quite worthy of her," the critical little matron thought. Yet it seemed as if no advantage of dress were needed to set off a face so rich in beauty of expression.

"A few minutes passed and the bell for the table d'hôte jangled out on the still air.

"Isn't that delightful?" said Isabel, rising, her eyes now full of mischief. "I am so hungry; aren't you? I have been wondering for the last five minutes whether they will give us carrot soup with mutton in it, or mutton soup with carrots in it: it is always one or the other."

"You were thinking of no such thing," cried Mrs. Lawrence, half resenting the sudden change. "You weren't thinking at all: you were dreaming."

"You know best," said Isabel gaily, as she gathered up her work and a couple of books which lay on the grass. "I must go and wake auntie. She never hears the bell."

A shadow fell across their path, and Isabel looked up just in time to see Mrs. Lawrence cast herself, with a low cry of delight, into the arms of a tall man.

"I want to introduce my husband to you, Miss Clifford," she said, with a beaming face. "Tom, you cannot imagine how kind Miss Clifford has been to me while you were away. You cannot be too grateful to her."

"Please believe that I am grateful, Miss Clifford," said Mr. Lawrence. "And intensely curious, also, to know into what difficulties my wife has managed to plunge herself in my absence."

"It is all a secret!" interposed his wife, hastily.

"Ah, then, I am sure to hear it," he returned, laughing, and drawing his wife's hand within his arm as they descended the steep slope behind the hotel. Isabel made up her mind that she liked Mr. Lawrence, and she was always friendly to people whom she liked. He had climbed the Wetterhorn two days before, and during dinner he gave a charming account of his experiences.

"How many were there in your party?" asked Isabel.

"One guide, with my brother and myself."

"By the way, when is Francis coming? I thought he would have been here with you," said Mrs. Lawrence.

"He will be here to-morrow. I don't expect he will stay long though. What do you think we heard at Grindelwald? There's a lady doctor coming here. Jackson met her last year at Montreux, where she performed some wonderful cures, and a friend of his heard that she is on her way to Rosenwald. You can imagine Frank's face when he heard that."

"Perhaps she's here now," suggested Isabel, with a steady look down the long table.

"Hardly," said Mr. Lawrence, following her look, which met only

portly Germans and one or two decidedly French-looking women.
"I hope she will come, though. It would be interesting."

"Don't say that, Tom," pleaded his wife, feeling uncomfortable.

"Be sure and point her out to me, if you see her," said Isabel,
"for of course she won't mind being stared at."

"Do you really think so?"

"Well, we won't stare. We'll only look," said Isabel, conscious
that Mrs. Lawrence was dismayed.

"What are you going to look at, Isabel?" asked her aunt, as they
rose from table.

"Only a curious specimen that Mr. Lawrence thinks he may be
able to show me," she returned, with a pleasant smile.

Out on the terrace Mrs. Lawrence took hold of Isabel's arm.
"My dear, what *do* you mean?" she said, in a low tone. "Tom
would never tell anybody. And he loves Nellie so, that I think he
ought to be told how ill she was."

"That seems an odd reason. But do what you think right," said
Isabel, with a sigh. "It's only for the sake of my own comfort, and
that, of course, isn't worth considering."

"Oh, then, I won't tell—if I can help it!" said Mrs. Lawrence,
with a repentant impulse.

"Do as you like. Good night!" answered Isabel, and followed
her aunt into the hotel.

"Now for the secret," said Mr. Lawrence, establishing his wife in
an arm-chair, and placing himself at her feet.

"Tom, I can't tell you. Don't ask me!"

"But you shouldn't have secrets from your husband. It's wicked."

"You'll know it one day," replied his wife, with an air of supe-
riority that wrought her doom.

"I can't wait. I'm impatient. I command you to tell me, Mrs.
Lawrence."

"I never, never will, Mr. Lawrence. So there!" The little woman
looked down on him with an expression of vast determination. He
changed his tactics.

"I know if it were anything of importance you would tell me, so it
is hardly worth asking about. Let's talk of something else."

"It's tremendously important."

"You have been excited over it, my little wife, whatever it was.
Has Miss Clifford a genius for—what do you call it?—making babies'
gowns?"

"Oh, you foolish Tom. As if I should be excited over that! No,"
and her voice trembled. "It was a great thing that she did for us—
for you and for me, Tom."

"Was it about Nellie?" he asked, all the playfulness now thrown
aside.

"Oh, she told me not to tell you, but I must. Nellie was so ill one
night; I was frightened; I could not leave her even to call Marie, and

I did not know what to do. But Miss Clifford came in, and did everything for her, and gave her medicine, and made her well. She is the doctor you have heard of," and Mrs. Lawrence hid her face on her husband's shoulder, as the memory of that dreadful night came over her again.

"My darling, I never thought of that," he said gently. Then : "So Miss Clifford wants her good deeds to be done in secret?"

"Last year the people staying at the hotel at Montreux used to stare at her and point her out so rudely that she cannot bear to let anyone here know. You must never breathe it to Francis, mind!"

"It would do Frank good," began Mr. Lawrence.

"Tom, I have a special reason of my own for wishing him not to know."

"Oh, you designing woman! Is that a secret too?" said her husband, as he rose to carry her chair within doors.

III.

FRANCIS LAWRENCE arrived at Rosenwald the next day, and the elder Miss Clifford fully agreed in his sister-in-law's good opinion of him. Isabel had long ago warned her aunt that her profession must be kept a secret on these holiday tours. Accordingly the old lady held aloof from all such topics, and found the young man very modest, sensible and obliging, as she told Isabel. Both ladies became more and more intimate with the Lawrences, and several excursions were made, in which Isabel only could join, for her aunt was well pleased to sit on the terrace for hours at a time knitting, reading and "thinking," as she said. Isabel was always accompanied by Mr. Lawrence, and Francis attended his sister-in-law, of whom he was evidently very fond. Consciously or unconsciously, Mrs. Lawrence talked a great deal of her new friend. Isabel's singing for Nellie, Isabel's reading aloud, Isabel's gentleness, candour, earnestness, fun—all these formed fruitful themes of discourse. To do Mrs. Lawrence justice, she would have talked as ceaselessly to her husband about Isabel if she had been alone with him, but it cannot be denied that she cherished the hope of making her two friends like one another. She was, therefore, greatly delighted when, one day, by some accident, Frank and Isabel went on together, and she was left with her husband. She longed to express her satisfaction, but with the instinct of a womanly woman, she said nothing, and her husband seemed to think only of the thunder-shower that threatened, but happily did not fall.

Isabel meanwhile enjoyed her climb. They went too fast for comfortable conversation, but now and then they interchanged remarks which showed that their thoughts ran in the same channel, and that they readily understood one another. They talked of the people whom they met, and of the sad change which travellers had wrought in the once brave and independent peasantry around.

"I cannot enjoy the mountains when I see that," said Isabel, looking towards a young girl who was carrying down the steep path a load of luggage which a strong man would call heavy.

"Yes," he said gravely, "this is the worst effect of all." As the girl passed he stood aside with a certain deference in his attitude. "Your heart is right," thought Isabel, "however wrong your head may be." She did not feel inclined to pursue the subject any further. They talked of other things, and Isabel soon found herself asking questions and receiving answers, much, as she told Mrs. Lawrence the next morning, in the style of the "Child's Guide to Knowledge."

"To be sure. Frank knows everything—except the 'pros' for women's rights!" said his sister-in-law, laughing.

"Don't use those words; I have an intense dislike to them," said Isabel.

"What words, may I ask?" And Mr. Lawrence appeared on the terrace, followed by his brother.

"Women's rights," said Mrs. Lawrence, mischievously.

"They are detestable words!" came from Frank, with vehemence; "I am glad you don't like them, Miss Clifford."

Isabel felt that she was misunderstood, but she did not choose to explain. Mrs. Lawrence was considerate enough to change the subject.

"Where shall we go this afternoon?" she said to her husband.

"Miss Clifford leaves to-morrow. It is so sad, Isabel. Only we shall see something of you in London next winter."

"I am sorry we shall lose you. My wife and Nellie and I are all very grateful to you," said Mr. Lawrence in his gentlest tone. Francis scarcely noticed it; but he looked a great deal, Mrs. Lawrence thought. Isabel only answered with regret in her voice: "It has been delightful here."

"We can climb the Simmelhorn in two hours," said Tom, consulting "Bædeker."

"Then, let us do that," said Mrs. Lawrence; and Isabel assented. She went away to find her aunt, who was writing in the salon, and Mr. Lawrence strolled away to where Nellie, under her nurse's care, was making a bouquet for her mother. Francis was left alone with his sister-in-law, and she instantly divined that this arrangement met his wishes. He remained silent for a few minutes, watching her, pretty hands, which were busily embroidering a little frock. At last he spoke.

"Where is Miss Clifford going?"

"To London. That is where they live. Why?"

"Do you think I might call and see them there?"

"You must ask her aunt. She will probably invite you to call when she is saying good-bye. You are a favourite with all old ladies, Frank!"

"She is not like anyone I ever met," said Frank earnestly.

"She is quite different from other women somehow." This might have referred to the elder Miss Clifford, but Mrs. Lawrence was now too sympathetic to be mischievous.

"I hope we shall often have her with us," she said. "I cannot afford to lose sight of her."

More silence followed and then Frank began again.

"Nora!"

"Yes."

"Do you—have you any idea—I mean——"

"I know what you mean, Frank, dear! Have patience. I cannot tell. But I know what you would say."

"You always do know," he said, with a grateful look.

"Don't be hasty, Frank. She is a woman worth winning. But remember that she had never seen you a fortnight ago. And she knows us so very little."

"I don't suppose she could ever care for me," he said sadly; "but one day I should like to try. There's no harm in trying. But I will do whatever you think best."

The party set off for their last climb, and Frank and Isabel went on as before. But Mrs. Lawrence felt unreasonably anxious with regard to her brother-in-law's happiness. She knew his strong prejudices, and she feared that somehow he would exhibit them to Isabel in their narrowest aspect, and repel her before he had begun to win her. Her fears were amply justified. An evil genius seemed to prompt his words.

"It is curious that so many women are eager for what they call their rights," he said. "I never knew one who cared for them or who would take them if they were offered. But then, I have been fortunate in my experience."

"I don't dislike the rights," said Isabel, feeling that now she ought to explain. "I dislike the words because they are so often wrongly used."

"Just so," he returned. "Those who use them have no true notion of what the highest rights of women are. They step down from their own platform to mingle with the crowd, and then they complain that we do not respect them. They lay hold of our work and forsake their own——"

"It is hard to say what is a woman's work," interrupted Isabel, whose cheeks were glowing now.

"Surely not," he said. "She is to be the inspiration of her husband, his comforter and help. Should she not marry, are there not the poor to occupy her, if family duties are wanting? *That* is the sphere in which women are always queens, always worthy of all honour." He spoke with enthusiasm, almost as if he were unconscious of her presence. But Isabel, full of her own thoughts, said very quietly:

"Then you would not approve of—women doctors, for instance?"

"Certainly not," he said with emphasis. "I could not respect such women."

The words, "I am one," leaped to Isabel's lips but got no further. The thought: "What is that to him?" came next and forbade her to speak. She had almost forgotten what Mrs. Lawrence had told her, for she and Francis had seemed to agree so well in all else. She was angry with him, and angry with herself for being angry.

"I do not care for his opinion!" she said to herself proudly, as she went on before him. Her silence made him fear that his words had annoyed her. "Perhaps I ought not to have said that to you," he said.

"You ought not to say it to anyone," she answered. "You ought not to think it." As she spoke she looked down on him with glowing cheeks. Every feature was eloquent, yet he hardly knew what she meant. He felt stunned and then distressed, as she turned and walked on before him with a quick, resolute step. Presently the path grew difficult, and passing her without speaking, he offered her his hand.

"Thank you. I need no help," she said.

"Pray forgive me if I have hurt you!" he pleaded, standing still on the narrow path.

"*Hurt*," she answered with a little laugh. "That is a strong word to use."

His quick perception told him that this was intended to convey, "Nothing that you could say would hurt me." He felt desperate. Nora's words sounded in his ears: "Have patience . . . she is a woman worth winning . . . don't be hasty!" but he flung them recklessly away.

"Will you sit down here for a moment," he said. "I want to tell you something that you ought to know." His tone was unconsciously hard and cold in the effort to seem unmoved, and she sat down with no thought of his purpose. Standing before her, he began:

"Nora tells me that I should wait, but I cannot do that, for I love you so dearly that I cannot help telling you, even though I know there is very little hope that you could ever love me——"

She looked up at him now with one swift glance—it might have been of pity or it might have been only of surprise. Then with her eyes on the ground and in tones as quiet and as full of effort as his own, she answered:

"You should not love me."

"I *should* not? Why?"

"Because you could not respect me," she said, looking once more into his face. "I am a doctor."

IV.

SOME months passed by before the Lawrences returned to their little home in Kensington. Isabel and Mrs. Lawrence had kept up a correspondence, and though on Isabel's side it was necessarily scanty,

for she was very busy, their friendship grew steadily. One day in January a note arrived from Mrs. Lawrence, saying that they were now at home, and begging that Miss Clifford and Isabel would dine with them on the following evening.

"You can go, Auntie," she said.

"And you too, dear, can't you?"

"Oh no, I cannot spare an evening just now. I shall go and see them soon enough."

Miss Clifford went and much enjoyed the quiet little dinner.

"Mr. Francis came in and stayed half-an-hour. Did you know he had taken orders, Isabel? How strange that you forgot to tell me. He looks terribly worn. Mrs. Lawrence says he works much too hard. He is not at all strong, I'm afraid."

"How does Nellie look?" asked Isabel, gazing into the fire.

"Quite well, little darling. She sat on her uncle's knee nearly all the time he was there. I don't think they ought to let her sit up so late. And she asked him if he remembered the lady that made her well at Rosenwald, and brought your picture to show him. We were all *so* amused, for you had kept it such a secret. He was embarrassed though, poor man, and I don't wonder after some of the things Mrs. Lawrence has told me he says about women."

"Did you see Mr. Lawrence's pictures? They are said to be very good?"

"I saw some of his own, but I'm no judge. There was a small Bellini that they spent nearly their last penny in buying at Milan. Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence had some joke about it, but Mr. Francis said they had no right to go about robbing churches."

Plainly Miss Clifford would talk of Mr. Francis to-night. So Isabel made no further remarks, and listened with a somewhat weary air to all that her aunt had to say. Like most women, the old lady took a deeper interest than ever in her favourite, now that he had become a clergyman.

The next day as Isabel was going out she found a poor woman waiting to speak to her.

"You 'tended my little boy in the hospital, my lady," said the woman. "Him as had the bad knee."

"I remember you," said Isabel, after a moment of reflection, for she had attended only too many bad knees at the Children's Hospital. "Did he get on well at the Convalescent Home?"

"Yes, my lady; he is there now. But my girl is bad and I thought you'd maybe come and look at her. I think it's the fever she's got."

Isabel knew from the woman's quiet, despairing look that she was one whose life was a long battle against want and misery of every kind. She promised to call and see the child within an hour. The "home" as the woman called it was a wretched room in a wretched alley in Seven Dials. Familiar as she had now become with such

scenes, Isabel was as acutely pained as ever at the sight of the suffering of the poverty-stricken. Her one consolation was that she was so often able to bring relief.

She knelt by the child who lay on a heap of rags on the floor.

"Her throat is sore, my lady, and she has pains like the rheumatics. I wish she was in the hospital too, only the neighbours told me they wouldn't take her in if it was fever."

"She ought to have been sent before," said Isabel. "We cannot move her now."

Scarlet fever was fully developed, she told the mother; and great care must be taken, for it was in a dangerous form. She gave some directions and then went away to find a nursing-sister who would help the mother to take the needful watching in turn. The next day and the next she visited the little patient, each time bringing something to make her more comfortable. A soft mattress replaced the bed of rags, and as her mother laid her upon it, the child said:

"Now please bring the gentleman."

"Whom does she want?" asked Isabel.

"It's the clergyman, ma'am. He came here a few weeks ago and ever since she's begging me to bring him again. He told her a story and it's been running in her head ever since. I think she was just beginning to be bad that day, and she wanders like about it now."

"I want the gentleman," murmured the child again; and then, as if repeating his words, she said, with a happy smile: "He put His arms around 'em and He wouldn't let 'em be sent away."

"She never asks for nothing but that," said the poor woman, looking sadly down on the flushed face of her child. "But I don't like to trouble the gentleman."

"I think he would be glad to come if you ask him," said Isabel.

"But you must tell him that it is scarlet fever."

Next day she found the small patient decidedly worse. She had been delirious in the night and had been pleading for "the story" that her friend had told her.

"So I saw his housekeeper this morning and asked her to tell him. He needn't come now unless he likes," said the mother, who evidently had small faith in clergymen.

But this clergyman came. Isabel had hardly left the alley when he entered it and found his way to the little room. The child recognised him at once and he said a few simple words that soothed her and that helped her mother also. When he went away he promised to come again on the morrow; but when the morrow came, little Maggie was no longer within reach of his words. The mother thanked him with a few silent tears and said as he was going down the staircase:

"I'd never have made bold to ask you, sir, but Miss Clifford said I might."

He turned quickly and said: "Has Miss Clifford been here?"

"Indeed she has, sir, and did all she could for us. She's well known to all the neighbours here for her goodness. There's my boy she sent to a Home at the sea-side for a month when he was discharged from the hospital—and if anyone could have saved Maggie, she would."

"Remember that your child is saved," said the clergyman, earnestly. "Saved from all the sorrow and pain and hardship of this life." And with a kindly shake of the hand, he went back to his study.

A few days afterwards Mrs. Lawrence wrote to Isabel saying that her brother was ill of scarlet fever. "His housekeeper gave him a message from a poor woman asking him to go and see her child who had it badly. We suppose he took it then," wrote Mrs. Lawrence.

"I am glad he went," said Isabel to herself.

V.

FOR many days Francis Lawrence lay fighting with the fever that seemed to have fastened on him with a death grip. Isabel heard of him constantly, for her aunt took pains to find out every day how he was. Maggie's mother, whom Isabel did not fail to visit after the child's funeral, told her of his goodness, saying, with the usual despondency of her class, "He'll die, my lady, for sure. Such as him isn't for this world."

But at last news came that he was to be moved to the sea-side, then that the journey had been accomplished, and that he was none the worse. Spring was now far advanced, and the leaves that had struggled into existence in London squares retained but little of their early freshness. Isabel was tired. The winter had been hard upon her, and she longed to lay down her work for a few days, and feel no responsibility. But no one guessed how tired she was, for she went about her work as carefully and as cheerfully as ever. The children in the hospital looked forward to her visits as to one of their treats, and she had many patients among the poor.

"The Lawrences are all back again, and Mr. Francis is with them," announced Miss Clifford one day when Isabel came home. Isabel made no reply, but leaned back in an arm-chair.

"You are doing too much, dear! I know you want a rest. Yes, they aren't afraid of the infection now. Nellie didn't know him when she saw him; he is such a shadow. But he goes about as usual. I told him we were at home to-morrow, and he said he would like to come with his sister."

"Very well, Auntie. There must be a first time," she added to herself, "and it is well to get it over."

Several visitors had come and gone the next afternoon before Mrs. Lawrence and Francis appeared. He was indeed only a shadow, and Isabel had a strange sense of beginning anew with him as she

saw his altered dress and his altered face. Yet before her eyes there rose the vision of that day upon the Simmelhorn when she had left him with the words that made the life-long separation between them: "You could not respect me." She saw the burning flush of pain that had suffused those pale cheeks, and the hopeless appeal in his eyes as she had passed him to return to the hotel. After a few minutes of general conversation he came close to the table where she was making tea and said:

"May I ask for a few words with you alone, now or soon? I will not detain you long—or say anything to trouble you," he added very gently as he saw that she was moved.

"I shall be alone at this time to-morrow," she answered simply, and held out her hand, for Mrs. Lawrence was taking leave. Isabel was glad to notice that her friend seemed to know nothing of what had just taken place: she could not bear the interference of even the most loving hand at this time. Yet Mrs. Lawrence saw more than she appeared to see.

The next morning passed quickly, and Isabel had only returned from an extra visit after luncheon when Francis was announced. She went to the dining-room, where he had been shown by her directions, and found him standing by the mantelpiece. He declined a chair, but placed one for her and began abruptly:

"I only want to tell you what I have learned since I knew you first. I had been living in my books and in myself when I met you, and I knew almost nothing of the world where you were living and working, and where I am now. I thought I knew my own duty and yours. I was mistaken. I knew neither. I was utterly wrong. Forgive me."

"Have you finished?" asked Isabel, looking up for a moment. "Yes, I forgive you for what you said about us all. I have nothing to forgive for myself. But I am glad that you understand that one cannot live among these people and see the terrible things that we see without longing to help them. But I ought to ask you to forgive me," she went on smiling. "Do you know that it was I who told little Maggie's mother to ask you to visit her?"

"Yes—I shall be grateful to you all my life for that," he said in his quietest tones. "But now I must go. I want you to understand that though I never can forget—I never can cease to love you—I will not intrude my love upon you again. You need not fear that I shall look for any return. And yet—" he went on as if in spite of himself—"if you ever can forget what I once said and thought—if you ever can give me a chance to win you, I love you so that I think I might succeed. There is work that we might do together—you and I. Oh, Isabel, if I might only try to win you!"

"You may try," she said softly.

THE LADY'S COIN.

A STORY OF NEW YEAR'S EVE.

I.

ALREADY, though barely three o'clock, the gas in the shops was lighted; the shops still decked in their Christmas trappings, and thronged by happy faces intent on New Year's gifts. The New Year—so soon expected—seemed hovering in the air; even work-houses had caught a gleam of hope.

"You must mind and get well enough to eat some roast beef at the feast to-morrow," said the nurse, passing swiftly down the whitewashed ward of one of their infirmaries. She was young and rosy-cheeked—a favourite—and the patients looked at her and chuckled.

"You too, she said, going on to the farthest bed: "I shall look out for one of the primeest cuts for you."

Two deep dark eyes looked up at her from a white and wasted face. A long bony hand was outstretched to clasp her dress.

"Stoop down—I want to speak to you," said a hollow voice, just able to make itself heard.

"All right—it will be a treat to hear you for once. You don't trouble us with much of your tongue!"

Her laugh was careless, but it broke suddenly off as she inspected the patient more closely. A male patient, on the shady side of middle age—his dark hair dashed with gray—his burning eyes the brighter from the whiteness of his face.

"Nurse, I'm going at last—and you've been good to me—you'll grant me one last favour?"

"What is it?" asked the young woman, kneeling at his side. It was true, she saw. He was going. She knew the signs only too well.

"This—" and his dying hand plucked feebly at a narrow black cord about his neck—"See—I'll show it to you—I've worn it thirty years, as I wear it now. You see it?"

She bent nearer to examine the object through which the cord was strung. He had drawn it up for her inspection, from the spot close to his heart where it had rested.

"Well now!" ejaculated the nurse, restoring it after a lengthened survey, and smoothing the sheet over the wasted form, with a tender hand, rough though it was: "There's a tale belonging to that, I'll be bound," she added, looking, with a softer interest, at the shadowy features. They were finely moulded. Yes, he had been a handsome man, once. Tall and broad, too, he must have been. And like a gentleman, somehow. And dying in a workhouse infirmary!

"Listen—listen," he whispered, grasping her dress again with one hand, while the other lay upon his breast enfolding his treasure. "Will you promise me? You can manage it, if you will. I want you to promise that it shall be buried with me—just where it is now—over my heart."

"I promise," said the young nurse. She was too young to be hardened. Two great tears filled her eyes as she spoke.

"Thank you," he said feebly, sinking back. "I know you won't forget. Thirty years! Thirty years to-day!"

Once afterwards, as if in sleep, he murmured these last words. It was a sleep from which, on earth, he never woke.

II.

"No, Rose. I will not hear of it. I am acting for your good. You will thank me for my firmness, some day."

"Oh, mother, mother! If such a day ever came, I should be a demon! Thank you for parting me from Godfrey? You don't know him, or you couldn't talk so."

"Whether I know him or not, my dear child, I know that he is ruined."

"And I am to forsake him because of that? Ruined. No such thing. He has plenty of brains and plenty of strength; he can work and earn his living like other men. And I would like to work with him."

"My poor little dreamer! But we have had enough of this. You may see him once more, at the ball to-night, to say good-bye; I will grant you so much; and then it is at an end."

The lady rose as she spoke; a vision of beauty and of grandeur which far outshone the girlish sweetness of the young daughter weeping at her side. Tall and stately, exquisite in form and feature alike, the advances of time skilfully disguised by arts almost rivalling nature, she looked every inch what she was—a goddess of the fashionable world. Once a distinguished beauty—a beauty still, although the mother of grown-up children—a Marchioness, moreover, married to one of our principal statesmen—she had a right, most people thought, to the cold and majestic pride by which, in private no less than in public, her manners and appearance were characterized. She could smile also; and when she smiled, all hearts were still taken by storm. She had smiled, once, upon the Godfrey of whom her child had spoken. But he was then rich, a fitting match for Rose, to whom she had suffered him to engage himself. Now his fortunes were changed: an unexpected claimant had turned up for his estates; there had been a lawsuit, a *cause célèbre*, ending unfortunately for Godfrey. He was still a gentleman to the backbone, honourable and true, but nothing any more in "Society."

"I'll never marry anyone else," sobbed Rose, "Never—never. You may separate us if you choose, mother, but you can't tear him out of my heart."

"For that I have no desire, my dear," said the Marchioness, with a touch of her fascinating smile. "He will fade out of it quite soon enough, in the course of nature. You are fresh from the world of novels, Rose, as yet. In real life hearts are not so unchangeable."

"Then I hate real life, mother. But I don't believe it."

"Perhaps I should not have believed it once," said the Marchioness. "I knew a girl once—just your age—as devotedly in love as any of your poets could desire. We were bosom friends, that girl and I——" She paused for a moment, and Rose looked up, her attention arrested. The Marchioness was smiling still; but the smile was just a little fixed. "Yes, she loved someone so much that when they were parted, she thought she could never be happy again. She wished she could die, for a time. But it passed over."

"And did she marry anyone else?"

"Yes, before they had been separated a year. He had promised to come back if he were fortunate, and try again. But he was not fortunate. He failed. And she had wise parents—such as myself. They enabled her to see that if he had been worthy of her love, if he had cared for it as she imagined he did, he would not have failed—he would have come back with honours. So she saw how undignified it would be on her part to wait for one who would not work for her; and by dint of resolution she overcame her foolishness, and made a sensible marriage."

"Her parents made it for her, I suppose."

"They convinced her of her duty in the matter, certainly; as I trust, my dear, some day to convince you."

"Never," cried Rose passionately. But the Marchioness smiled again, and sailed from the room.

On the stairs she met an elderly little man, his brow peevish, his hands full of papers.

"No rest even in this short holiday, Claremont? You will be able to come with us to the ball to-night, I conclude?"

"Impossible, Eleanor. You must make my excuses. I have most important committee business to look into this evening. I can't on any account be interrupted."

He passed her rapidly, and vanished. The Marchioness saw no occasion to trouble him concerning Rose and Godfrey. He was a complete Gallio in the affairs of his younger children, and left them all to his wife.

III.

"SUCH a romantic story, my lady. I'm sure it would interest your ladyship."

It was the Marchioness's maid who spoke. She was arraying her mistress for the ball: a fancy dress ball, masked, to be held at a

great house, to please some great lady's fancy, on that New Year's Eve.

"You are dying to tell it, Palmer, at all events; so tell on," said the Marchioness, languidly.

"It was my cousin, my lady; I had it from the cousin I told your ladyship of, who came up from the country in October: nurse at the Wall Street Union, my lady, if you remember. She looked in just now, being out for an hour or so; it cheers her up to see me sometimes, poor girl. It was a man who died this afternoon in the Union, my lady; how she can have the nerve, I've no idea! she had actually laid him out."

"There, that will do, Palmer," said the Marchioness: "What about the man?"

"Well, he died, my lady—and before he died, he made my cousin promise that something he wore round his neck should be buried with him. On his heart, my lady. And my cousin, she's keeping her word."

"And what was this mysterious thing? Therein, I suppose, lies the romance," said the Marchioness, lightly.

"Yes, my lady. Never did I hear! It was the half of a sixpence, with a hole in it; and he'd had it strung round his neck by a bit of cord. It was an old sixpence, most beautifully marked—my cousin says she never saw such cleverness—with a name cut out in the silver; and under the name: 'New Year's Eve, /57.' And there it lies on the poor fellow's heart."

"And the name?"

"Are you feeling unwell, my lady? Shall I get you some sal-volatile?"

"No.—Go on.—The name. What was the name?"

"The name was 'Nelly,' my lady. That was the inscription:—

'NELLY.

'New Year's Eve,

'/57.'

Some sad story belongs to that, my lady, we may depend. The man—my cousin believes he was a gentleman once. He'd only been in a few days; brought from some poor lodging, in a state of destitution, she said. They think he gave a wrong name—'John Brown,' or some such, he called himself. But he seems to have had no one belonging to him!"

"And he had worn—that—all those years?"

"Thirty years, my lady," he said. "Thirty years to-day. My lady, I must really get you the sal volatile. Your ladyship's gone as white as a sheet; it's that nasty palpitation again!"

"Yes, Palmer, you can leave me for a little while. I will ring. I must be quiet."

The maid was alarmed, but she knew the Marchioness too well to

disobey. She left the room. An instant later, she thought she heard a cry, and returned. But when she listened at the door, all was silence.

IV.

THE ball had begun. Gay figures in all imaginable eccentricities of attire, and all closely masked, filled the brilliantly-lighted saloons. Some danced; some chatted in groups; some roamed from room to room, in amused endeavour to solve the surrounding problems. It was difficult—in most cases impossible—to pronounce who was who. But two—a young man dressed like a crusader, and a girl like a Watteau shepherdess, had speedily discovered one another.

They had danced together, and now they were sitting amid the orange-trees of a beautiful conservatory, talking in low tones.

"Never mind, darling," said the young man. "I will live for you, I will work for you—I will think of you only—and when I have won my spurs, I will come back:—if only you care enough to wait?"

"Oh, Godfrey, you know, you know! As if I could ever think of anyone else! Oh, to hear mother talk! But Godfrey, she doesn't know what love is. She has never loved anyone herself, you see;—perhaps I oughtn't to say it, when there is my father—but—he was so much older than she was, and he cares only for politics—it never could have been like you and me! You don't think me undutiful, Godfrey? You understand?"

Understand? of course he did!—and so they talked on and on, all the world to one another; forgetting the time, forgetting everyone outside that conservatory. At last, however, Rose remembered the Marchioness, from whose wing she had escaped.

"I hope she won't be angry with me for staying so long. She said I might be with you this one night. But perhaps we had better try to find her now."

They tried, but were unsuccessful; so, nothing loth, returned to their hiding-place amid the orange-blossoms.

Meanwhile a tall figure, in a long black cloak, was knocking at the workhouse door in Wall Street. A woman had called to make inquiries about the man who had died that afternoon, was the message shortly brought to the master.

"She says, sir, she thinks she can identify him, and in that case his friends would not wish him to have a pauper funeral."

So the master allowed her—a respectable woman evidently; handsome too, beneath her heavy black veil—to be conducted to the mortuary. The nurse escorted her, holding a lantern, across a paved courtyard.

"You're not nervous, ma'am, at seeing a dead person?"

"I shall not be nervous if . . . if he is the person I knew."

The nurse unlocked a strong door, they entered a stone-flagged

room. It had only one tenant—a long figure stretched, covered by a sheet, upon a bier. The woman paused suddenly.

"I'm afraid you're nervous, after all, ma'am," said the nurse.

"No. But—I must be left alone here for a little while. Go outside and guard the door, and I will reward you."

The girl hesitated, but there was gold in the stranger's hand. She looked at her curiously and yielded.

"You won't be long, then? I'll wait five minutes," she said; and withdrew, leaving the lantern.

The woman went up to the bier. She was trembling from head to foot, but her will was strong. She raised the sheet. There was the dead face. Haggard, worn, wasted—the eyes no longer burning to relieve the whiteness. The features strongly marked, the dark hair dashed with gray, the expression that of one who has suffered long, who has been beaten down in the battle of life—tired, tired—and broken hearted. Round the throat lay the narrow black cord.

"John!" said the woman. "John!"

No voice answered. But suddenly the bells of New Year's Eve rang out from a neighbouring tower.

"Thirty years ago to-night," she said. "This very night thirty years ago!" Then she bent down and kissed the cold and careworn brow. Thirty years ago had those motionless arms been around her. But her kiss was unheeded now.

And outside, the bells were ringing as they had rung on that evening of her recollection.

V.

"It's the most curious thing, my lady! You remember what I was telling your ladyship about the poor man at the workhouse?"

"I remember."

"Well, that very night, quite late, my lady, a woman, who wouldn't give her name, called to identify him. They let her see him, and it seems she knew who he was; the family must have sent her, all secret, wishing not to be disgraced, no doubt, by the appearance of names. And next day an undertaker called and said a lawyer had sent him to arrange for the funeral; and the poor man was buried very respectable in Brompton Cemetery, and an order given for a stone. But the curious thing, my lady, is this. When they put him in the coffin, my cousin found that the coin had disappeared."

"The coin!"

"The sixpence, my lady, that I told you of; that he'd worn round his neck. My cousin felt, to make sure it was right, remembering her promise; and the cord had been cut off short, and the sixpence was gone! No one knew who took it, and they'll never find out—there must be a sight of queer folks about a workhouse. My cousin would have suspected the woman, only she seemed so respectable. But she's set it down as a mystery, and so it must abide."

"There are many mysteries in this world," said Rose, to whom Parker duly reported the strange story. Her mind was just now full of another mystery—the extraordinary change in her mother as regarded herself and Godfrey.

Godfrey had called on New Year's Day, the day following the ball, to plead his cause once more ; and, wonderful to relate, he had not pleaded in vain. The Marchioness, after hearing his arguments, had consented that Rose should wait for him ; had promised, further, that her husband's political interest should be exerted on his behalf.

"It seems too wonderful to be true !" cried Rose. "Oh, mother, how good you are ! but what has changed you so ?" she said.

"Perhaps it was less a change than a revival," said the Marchioness.

A reply most enigmatical to Rose. But she was too happy to think about it.

VI.

NEW YEAR'S EVE had come again, and again the bells were ringing the old year to his rest.

"Rose," said the Marchioness, "I have something to ask you. Come close to me."

Rose obeyed, her tears falling fast. For her mother was dying.

She had been pining all the year—from some affection of the heart, said the physicians. Pining in a stately manner, making no complaints—but pining nevertheless : until at length, still stately, she had taken to her bed. In November she had insisted that Rose and Godfrey—whose affairs were now in a prosperous condition—should be married. She wished, she said, to see them happy ; and happy they undoubtedly were. But—somewhat suddenly at last—the end had come for the Marchioness.

She lay—not on a workhouse bed—but propped up with laced pillows ; surrounded by every luxury that eye or mind could desire. It was New Year's Eve—and here was another death-bed : strange contrast to that pauper death-bed twelve months before !

"Rose," said the Marchioness, "when I am gone, you will find a little silk bag near my heart. You and Godfrey—you two only—may look inside ; and then, I wish you to lay it with your own hands upon my heart again, and to see that it is buried with me in my coffin."

Rose promised ; and an hour later, her mother had passed away. The little bag was found as she had said. Rose, her husband's arm supporting her, opened it, and looked within. There, strung upon a fragment of narrow black cord, lay the half of an old sixpence—encircled by a lock of hair—of dark hair, dashed with gray. And cut upon it, with wonderful skill, were these words : "Nelly. New Year's Eve. /57." It was placed as desired, upon her heart, to go down with her to her grave.

And the bells were ringing, as they had rung on that other New Year's Eve, one-and-thirty years ago.

E. CHILTON.

VOLENTIBUS ANNIS.

—VIRG.

No, weep and mourn them as we will,
 We cannot bring them back ;
 They passed like sunshine from the hill,
 And left as little track.

Youth's hopes and loves and happy dreams,
 Our castles in the air,
 Though built of morning's brightest beams,
 What are they now—and where ?

Our tender walks on twilight eves,
 In tangled woods and dells,
 Soothed by the sound of whispering leaves,
 And breeze-borne village bells.

No laughter through the coppice rings,
 Our gipsy jaunts are o'er ;
 Our harps—who'll tune the broken strings,
 Or wake their music more ?

Eyes look their last, hands meet and part,
 And lips lie mute and cold ;
 What strains can ever touch the heart
 Like those we heard of old ?

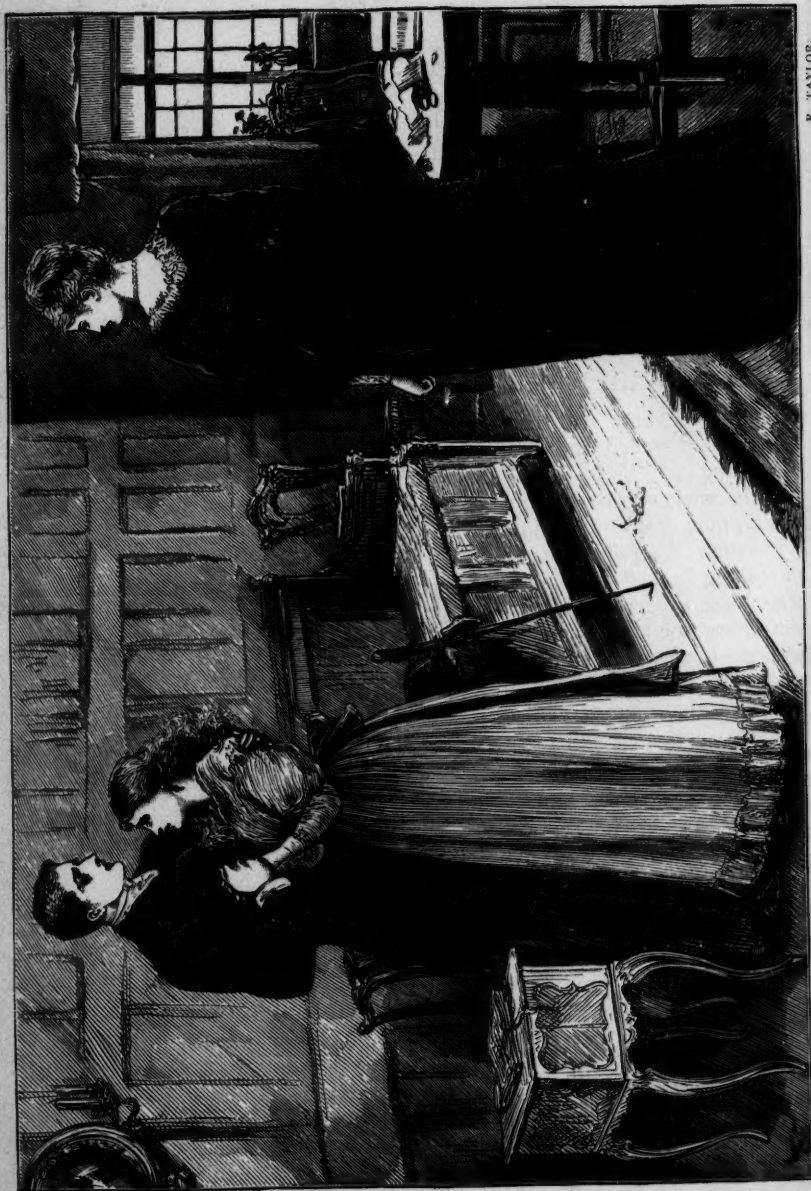
Our dearest earthly joys must die,
 However sharp the pain,
 And none but boys and girls should sigh
 To have them back again.

For us the owl and ivied tower,
 And bat on dusky wing,
 Are fitter than the summer bower,
 And song birds of the spring.

See but the nettle now, and briar,
 Where Beauty's haunts have been,
 And memory with her mournful lyre
 Sole minstrel of the scene.

Those silent stars, the tranquil night,
 Recall the vanished years ;
 Their mirth and smiles too soon took flight,
 And left the gloom and tears.

LINDON MEADOWS.



M. ELLEN STABLES.

THEY WERE FAIRLY CAUGHT.

R. TAYLOR.